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LEO ORNSTEIN

THE MAN—HIS IDEAS
HIS WORK

BY

FREDERICK H. MARTENS

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TO HIS FRIEND

A. WALTER KRAMER,

THE FIRST IN THIS COUNTRY TO RECOGNIZE
LEO ORNSTEIN'S MUSICAL MESSAGE,
AND IN WORD AND DEED A CONSISTENT DEFENDER
OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY OF MUSICAL EXPRESSION,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.

LEO ORNSTEIN

Preface

LEO ORNSTEIN to many represents an evil musical genius wandering without the utmost pale of tonal orthodoxy, in a weird No-Man's Land haunted with tortuous sound, with wails of futuristic despair, with cubist shrieks and post-impressionistic cries and crashes. He is the great anarch, the iconoclast, the destructive genius who would root out what little remains of the law and the prophets since Scriabin, Stravinsky and Schönberg have trampled them underfoot. His earlier compositions which, with happy fancy and considerable skill, exploit the possibilities of the diatonic system he has since abandoned, are regarded much as would be the Sunday-school certificates of an apostate to Satanism, the lisped prayers of one who has forgotten them to celebrate a Devil's mass. His gospel is black heresy, his dispensation a delusion and a snare! It is thus that the more rigid upholders of tradition, those who scorn taking the pains to master the idiom which serves to express his ideas, see him.

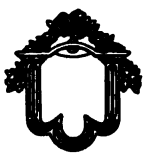
The attitude of the more formalistic musician and music-lover toward Ornstein's music, however, is largely a matter of æsthetic point of view, and æsthetic points of view are not built upon the rock of infallibility, but on the shifting sands of contemporary disquisition. Those who understand Ornstein's tonal language—and their number is increasing—are as enthusiastic in their admiration of his accomplishment as his detractors are scornful of its value and significance.

It is not the mere fact that the writer is a friend of

Ornstein, that he has an acquaintance at first hand with the composer's aims and aspirations, that the latter has played much of his music for him under intimately favorable conditions which has prompted the following pages, but the conviction that a study of the man, his ideas and his work would be of value in correcting false impressions regarding the composer, his ideals and their practical expression.

In this connection the writer, in addition to the valuable information given him by Mr. Ornstein himself, has drawn largely on all material available in the shape of articles, interviews, critiques *et al,* and has endeavored to give credit where credit is due.

FREDERICK H. MARTENS.



THE MAN

Of course, those that dislike him, the music that he plays, and the stir that he makes in what should be a tranquil, elderly world, will call him insincere. For to be certain of the motives and mental processes of those whom we dislike has long been one of the exalted prerogatives of our common humanity.

H. T. PARKER.

I.

THE MAN

SOME account of the life of a creative artist would seem a logical prelude to a consideration of his ideas and their creative development. And particularly so in the case of Leo Ornstein, the circumstances of whose life and the influence of whose surroundings are so vividly reflected in the music he has written. Ornstein has put so much of his own emotional and impressional life and the life of his time into his creative work, that the story of his twenty-two years of existence—he was born in Kremenchug, a town of southwest Russia, December 11, 1895—explains and in some degree motives his artistic activities, opens up vistas of understanding and appreciation for them, and establishes the connection between his life itself and his life-work up to the present time—for the composer cannot, as yet, be said to have reached the full plenitude of his powers.

Ornstein's recollections of his childhood are vivid. Kremenchug, an important commercial town of nearly sixty thousand inhabitants, is situated on the Dnieper river in a flat, dreary countryside, and before the war was the centre of the tallow trade with Warsaw. The government of Poltava, in which it lies, was included within the pale of settlement first established in 1791, by which a great Jewish population was held down in a congestion which worked terrible destitution and misery, and reduced them to a condition of abject poverty and despair.

Though no doubt subconsciously influenced by his environment, the boy led the ordinarily happy life of all children. He speaks with affection of the old wooden

house in which he grew up, built round a court with a well in the centre, and of the daily joy of bathing with the companions of his own age in the Dnieper during the hot days of the short Russian summer. He was not more than three years old when he began to study music, encouraged and taught by his father, a *rabbi*, who himself had acquired fame as a synagogal cantor when only eighteen. Unlike some hapless children whose musical talent is developed along the lines laid down by the originators of *paté-de-fois-gras*, he was not driven to consume ceaseless hours in practice. On the contrary, so eager was he to make progress that he would beat his older brother with his little fists in order to drive him from the piano when he thought the latter had pre-empted it overlong. And when no more than five he not only played on the piano a Russian folk-song which he had heard sung for the first time, but also followed it up with a series of improvised variations of his own. Although his father was opposed to his studying music as a profession, his brother-in-law, M. Titiev, a violinist, overcame his opposition, and as a result the lad was taught the elements and put through a thorough course of scales and five-finger exercises, Kuhlau, Clementi, and the easier compositions of Bach and Handel.

Josef Hoffman came to Kremenchug in 1902, and young Ornstein played for him, was praised and received a letter recommending him to the Petrograd Conservatory. Some time later the boy sought out Vladimir Puchalski (composer of a *Little-Russian Fantasy* for orchestra, an opera, and an attractive octave study well known to pianists), played for him and was accepted as a pupil at the Imperial School of Music at Kiev, of which Puchalski was the director.

The death of an aunt, however, interfered with his plans of study at Kiev. He was obliged to return to

Kremenchug and work with local teachers. Gabrilowitch, who gave a concert there in 1903, also heard him play, and gave him a letter to Alexander Siloti, at the Moscow Conservatory. But the boy had not as yet made up his mind definitely where and with whom to study. Merely to gain self-confidence (Ornstein, even yet, is far more diffident than he is supposed to be), he took an entrance examination for the Conservatory of Poltova, and decamped as soon as he was offered a scholarship. Meanwhile his father had reached a decision for him. He was to go to Petrograd (1904). Before he went, he enjoyed his first real contact with native music at an old-fashioned provincial wedding, at which a wealthy merchant celebrated the nuptials of his daughter with a week of dancing and festivity. Balalaika orchestras and folk-song choruses were a feature of the affair and woke that interest in Russian folk-song which has since been reflected in the composer's earlier *Russian Suite* for piano, the *Russian Impressions* for violin and piano and, more recently, in new Russian songs and his choruses. At Petrograd Leo played, not without tremors, for Alexander Glazounov, director of the Conservatory, and was at once accepted as a pupil. At the test he gave an unconscious exhibition of his possession of "perfect pitch." The piano, though not out of tune, had been tuned a half-tone lower than ordinary, and the boy of eight, sensitive to the change, transposed at sight the pieces by Bach and Mozart given him to play. Glazounov was interested, and had him play three-part inventions of Bach blindfold, and tell him the names of the chords.

But this initial success did not console the lonely and homesick boy when his father left him alone in the metropolitan city, cut off from all who were dear to him and plunged suddenly into a new and strange mode of life. Yet there was much to hold his attention and interest, and

in the course of time he reconciled himself to the change. He practised three hours a day; studied theory and harmony with Medemi (though Mme. Essipoff had expressed a wish to teach him); attended all rehearsals and concerts of the Conservatory orchestra, directed by Glazounov, where he became acquainted with the works of Moussorgsky (Zimbalist, the violinist, was a member of the graduating class at the time); frequented the opera, the ballet, concerts and recitals, and drank in music generally at every pore.

An abiding musical influence, which afterward made itself felt largely in his compositions, was the Oriental chant, which he had absorbed as a child in the South. In Petrograd he learned to know the ritual music of the Greek and Armenian Churches, semi-oriental in character, and regularly attended the services in the great Russian cathedrals, so fascinated was he with these ritual chants. His work bears eloquent testimony to the fact that these impressions were of a lasting nature.

His marked talent soon made him a favorite of those aristocratic *salons* of Petrograd where music was cultivated, and he was spoiled and petted to a degree by the music-loving society of the Russian capital. He might easily, in the course of a few years, have become a kind of immature Henselt, *persona grata* at the Imperial Court and with nobiliary circles, producing elegant and finely chiseled salon music, uniting the Lisztian sonority and Hummelian smoothness of his predecessor, and oblivious of the sterner and truer message of realism and individuality that was in him to deliver. Yet the same sinister influences which, subconsciously, perhaps, had shadowed his childhood in Kremenchug were to be emphasized and strengthened by other impressions of terror, and of the undying struggle of the down-trodden for freedom from tyranny, which found a quasi-humorous reflex in a strike

of the Conservatory pupils. The boy was an eye-witness and very nearly a victim of the Russian revolution of 1905. While attending his classes at the Conservatory (at which a general as well as a purely musical course was prescribed) young Ornstein was earning a living by coaching aspiring singers in operatic *rôles*. Thus he came to know much of the standard repertory—*Aïda, Faust, Onegin, Mefistofile, Samson and Delilah,* etc.—and a ludicrous incident in this connection was the appearance one day of a large man of more than thirty-five interrupting his prospective teacher of twelve in a snowball fight in order to take his lessons. This existence of work and study, and of keen absorption of all that literature found to offer an opening mind—since before he was twelve years old the boy had begun to devour Tolstoy, Andreyev, Chekov, as well as Shakespeare, Balzac and other non-Russian classics in translation—was rudely interrupted by the revolutionary cataclysm.

Day after day, on his way to and from the Conservatory, he saw the street fighting that reigned, would rush into the narrow alleys between the houses when the cry of *"Cosaki, Cosaki!"* rose, and the wild horsemen charged down the avenues, shooting and sabering indiscriminately all who came in their way, whether revolters who had been singing the *Internationale,* or innocent passersby. He saw the slaughter on the Admiralty Square, and on one occasion, when a Cossack charge went thundering down the street as he was hastening to the Conservatory with his roll of music, was thrust into a dry-goods shop in the nick of time, and had to remain there fourteen hours before it was safe to venture forth. On a precocious child, acutely sensitive and receptive, and with an intellectual grasp and emotional development beyond his years, all this could hardly have failed to make a lasting impression, one whose motive recurs again and again in his

music. Much in his *Suite des Gnomes,* for instance, though its programmatic application is to humanity at large rather than to any one of its racial segments, owes its origin to his recollections of this period of his life.

For, to add to the danger threatening the boy, cast on his own resources in a city in plain revolution, the revolutionary terrorists were countered by the terrorists of reaction who, under the name of "The Union of the Russian People," began a crusade of extermination against the elements supposed to be hostile to the autocratic *régime.* Their "black hundreds" directed their attacks especially against the Jews and—the boy was of that race! His father and family (themselves implicated in revolutionary propaganda, for Ornstein has told the writer of hidden stores of arms and ammunition held in reserve against a possible *pogrom* in Kremenchug) became alarmed. Leo was taken from Petrograd to Kremenchug and thence, soon after, the entire family fled to this country, arriving here in 1907.

Once more the boy underwent the experiences of a complete transition. Fresh from his Petrograd experiences, he came from the most autocratic of empires to the most liberal of republics. As Rosenfeld says: "Probably the luckiest thing that happened to young Ornstein was the flight of his family from Kremenchug that transformed him during the formative period of his life from the pianist infant-prodigy of Petrograd society into the boy of a dense and livid slum." On the lower East Side, in Attorney Street, Leo Ornstein gradually sloughed his Russian skin and became an American boy. He went to school, he practised—for he had no intention of giving up his music—he played with other boys in the block. And he attended the Institute of Musical Art, where he had been given a scholarship, and also the Friends' Seminary. At the Institute he had occasional difficulties. A lad of

his exceptional maturity of mind and quick intellectual grasp was naturally impatient of year-long harmony and theory courses along the traditional lines; he questioned authority, he kicked against the pricks instead of deferring to them. But he graduated in due time and is now, no doubt, more tolerant in retrospect as regards possible differences of opinion he may have had with his teachers in harmony and theory, Dr. Percy Goetschius and R. Huntington Woodman. During this time he was an indefatigable worker. He rose at five in the morning, and the old cobbler living beneath him once told him he was the only one in the house to get to work before he did. He toiled at his piano and at composition, and amid the constrained and depressing conditions of his external existence, the misery, gloom and unhappiness which he saw about him on every side, he found his consolation in work. And here again, as in the case of his revolutionary impressions, his emotions were later to be woven into the very texture of his music. When he found his own idiom, when he had mastered the tonal language necessary to express what he felt, "it was the voice of the city proletariat, that pierced, raucous and dissonant, but with a primeval starkness that left no suspicion of the sentimentally sordid, into European music."

At the New York Conservatory, Ornstein was the piano pupil of the late Mrs. Bertha Feiring Tapper, herself a musician of rare gifts and sympathetic insight, and a pupil of Svendsen and Agatha Backer-Grondal. He had already begun to study with another instructor when Mrs. Tapper first heard him play, and remarked that she wished she had a boy of such talent to teach. The teacher who had him in charge did not appreciate Ornstein's possibilities. He told Mrs. Tapper that she was welcome to him, and thus he became her pupil. Of this "guide, philosopher and friend," rather than mere teacher, Ornstein

invariably speaks with reverence and affection. She was unwearied in his training, not alone in a purely musical sense, but in her cultivation of his mind along broader educational lines. The composer acknowledges her as the greatest individual influence in his career. Dr. Tapper was as much interested as was his wife in the boy's development, and for several successive summers he spent two months with them at Blue Hills, Me., devoting himself principally to technical work. These summer months were the brightest spots of his year. Here, in addition to his technical practise, he worked at Haydn and Mozart sonatas, Bach and Beethoven, and laid a foundation of appreciation for the classics before coming in touch with the works of the modernist composers. Here he would listen to Franz Kneisel and Mrs. Tapper play sonatas, and at Dr. Horatio Parker's cottage heard most of *Mona* played by the composer from MS.

In the spring of 1910 Mrs. Tapper took her pupil with her to Europe. This first visit to the Continent was a comparatively brief one. Leo heard Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* at the Paris *Opéra,* attended various concerts, the playing of the late Raoul Pugno in particular making a deep impression on him, and encountered modern music for the first time in the shape of the César Franck *Sonata* for violin and piano. A taste of mountain climbing in the Austrian Tyrol, a visit to Vienna, where Leschetiszky played Chopin and Schumann for him, attendance at the Salzburg Festival, where he heard Mozart's *Don Giovanni,* with Lehmann and Geraldine Farrar, and a stay at Dresden, where he played symphonies for four hands and in this way became acquainted with those of Brahms, in his opinion "superior to Beethoven's," are its salient points. From Dresden he returned to New York and gave his first public concert in that city at the New Amsterdam Theatre, March 5, 1911. He had a large audience

and his renderings of Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue,* Beethoven's *Sonata Appassionata,* some Chopin numbers and Rubinstein's *D Minor Concerto,* with accompaniment of orchestra, were well received. Arthur Brisbane, in an editorial in the *New York Evening Journal* (June 11, 1910) had already spoken prophetically of the extraordinary promise displayed by the pianist in a concert given by the Institute of Musical Art in Mendelssohn Hall a few days before, and paid a deserved tribute of appreciation to his teacher.* He said in part: "We believe that this boy, providentially saved from Russia, brought up in the poverty of a great city, will stand with the great musicians of the world, on a par with the greatest *interpreters* of musical genius and perhaps among the greatest musical creators!"

His promising first appearance, succeeded by concerts in Philadelphia and elsewhere, was, however, only an incident in a very busy life of study, a kind of foretaste of what the future might bring. Ornstein continued to study with Mrs. Tapper, and after his graduation from the Institute of Musical Art began to work *con amore* at composition. But in the spring of 1913 he found his true idiom of expression for the first time, the one in which he has since written almost exclusively, with only occasional returns to his earlier manner. As he has described it to the writer, this new idiom was the outcome of a sudden mental illumination. Without any previous intimation he found that he had at last discovered ways and means to express his innermost emotions in tone, unfettered by any rule which might do violence to his individual concept.

* "Years of patient teaching, ceaseless encouragement and protection Mrs. Tapper has given this boy, whose power she was the first to see—long hours, days and months of patient, kind correction and explanation—and all for no other reward than the pleasure of seeing the lad, poor and friendless at first, take his right place in the field of accomplishment."

MRS. THOMAS TAPPER

For weeks he lived in a daze, experimenting with, testing and perfecting the details of his new expressional mode, and, once its principles established in his mind, wrote his entire *Dwarf Suite* in a single day. When he first played his *Wild Men's Dance* for Mrs. Tapper she thought he had lost his mental self-control, and it was not until after repeated performances that she recognized the principle underlying its music. With all this leaven of new ideas and ideals fermenting within him it seemed that another European trip, which would bring him in closer touch with modern thought and endeavor, might be valuable for the development of the youthful pianist and composer.

Hence, in the summer of 1913, Ornstein once more crossed the ocean in company with Mrs. Tapper and went directly to Paris. It was here that the sudden and overwhelming projection of Notre-Dame on his consciousness had such an effect on the composer that it evoked the two *Impressions* which bear its name. For three weeks after he had set them down on paper the composer had no chance to play them. It was not until he found himself in Switzerland, whose scenic beauties inspired another set of *Quatre Impressions de la Suisse,* for four hands, and where he wrote a quartet and a quintet for strings, that he had an opportunity of playing them. From Switzerland he went to Vienna, where he first realized that, aside from his earlier, more conventional style and his new manner, he was in addition the possessor of a third, and began the "Vannin" *Waltzers* and *The Night.* In Vienna he heard *Der Rosenkavalier,* and here Leschetiszky confessed that he could not at first believe the *Wild Men's Dance* had been seriously "written out" as it stood, and was not a species of musical hoax. In Berlin, which he also visited, Ornstein made the acquaintance of Ferruccio Busoni, whom he admires as "a great intellect in music," and thence went to Norway, practising where he could, composing

on trains, and making his *début* in Christiania as a concert pianist with a group of Chopin pieces and the Liszt *E Flat Major Concerto.* He also, for the first time, played some of his own newer compositions and drew from critics the statements that "it was amazing that Mr. Ornstein should have decided to play a little joke on the public and transfer it from the concert hall to the dental parlor," and that he was "a young man temporarily insane." Though those who condemn mountain climbing may regard the fact as a corroboration of the last-mentioned statement, it might be mentioned that while in Norway the composer ascended the Gaudepeggyn, the highest peak in the country.

From Christiania Ornstein turned to Denmark, and in Copenhagen gave his more than conventionally attractive *Russian Suite* and *Cossack Impressions* for piano to the Danish publisher, Wm. Hansen. And thence he went to Paris (Mrs. Tapper had returned to America while he was still in Norway), to meet Harold Bauer. This visit to Paris marked an epoch in Ornstein's career. He was at last to be taken seriously, by competent judges, as a composer with a new and important message to deliver, one which deserved hearing, irrespective of whether he might be acclaimed or condemned.

As is but natural under these circumstances, Ornstein's experiences in Paris are dear to him. In telling the writer about them, he has dwelt on his interesting musical discussions with Bauer, who, with all the good will in the world, could not "see" his music, but gave him introductions which opened the Paris world of music to him. It was through Bauer that he met Walter Morse Rummel, who gave him a letter to the famous critic Calvocoressi.

Ornstein's own account of their first meeting and its results is not without interest: "I went with my letter to Calvocoressi's apartment; he had a suite of rooms some three flights up in the *Rue de Caroussell,* and a blind

woman—his mother—opened the door in answer to my ring. I was ushered into his studio, a pleasant room, its walls covered with books and pictures, with a grand piano littered with manuscripts, and a tall dark man, with a slight stoop, rose from his desk to receive me. He had a gentle voice and sympathetic manner and, after reading my letter, asked me in Russian—and it was a great pleasure to hear the accents of my mother-tongue again—whether I composed or merely played modern music. I told him that I took the liberty of doing both, and he at once had me sit down at the piano. I played my *Wild Men's Dance* and the two *Impressions* for him, and he seemed amazed and unwilling to believe that the former could have originated in New York City. He insisted that I return the next day and play it again for him and for some musicians whom he expected to invite. And thenceforward his kindness and interest were unfailing. He secured various wealthy pupils for me—for I was stranded—to coach in song and opera, and thus I was able to make a living without giving over my composition. Though I was too busy with my lessons and work to meet many people, I made the acquaintance of the Roumanian Princess de Brancovan and the gifted music-lover and musician, Mme. Landsberg—she sang very well—wife of the Brazilian banker of the same name, to each of whom I ascribed one of my *Preludes,* and for both of whom I played; as well as the American-born Princess de Polignac, who has taken such an interest in Stravinsky's music, and at whose musicales I also appeared.

"During February and March of 1914 Calvocoressi gave a series of lecture-recitals, two of them devoted to the *Géographie Musicale de l'Europe,* with musical illustrations drawn entirely from works of modernist composers. In the first lecture were represented Richard Strauss songs, piano pieces by Bela Bartok, Zoltan Kodaly,

Vilmos-Geza Zagon, Serge Liapounov, and Cyril Scott's 'Jungle Book' pieces, which last I played. At the second lecture-recital I played my own *Impressions de la Tamise* and *Danse Sauvage* and piano pieces (Op. 11 and 19), by Arnold Schönberg. Stravinsky's interesting *Mélodies Japonaises* were also sung at this recital."

While thus occupied in Paris, Ornstein had made the acquaintance of various young Oxfordians, of W. H. Osgood and of Mr. Roger Quilter, the last-named "a quite wonderful personality," to quote his own words, who had heard him play and grown enthusiastic about his music. These new friends insisted on his making a little vacation trip to Oxford, there to meet other musical students and musicians, with whom they were desirous he should come in touch. The experience promised to be an interesting one, and Ornstein yielded to the warm solicitations of his well-wishers, and to a desire to know at first hand something of the charm of the

"City of friends and echoes, ribbons, music and color,
Lilac and blossoming chestnut, willows and whispering limes."

He went and was given a welcome in accord with Oxford traditions. Here he met Robert Bridges, the poet; Balfour Gardiner, the Post-Elgarian composer, whose symphonic compositions include the *Shepherd's Fennel Dance,* a symphony and the vigorous *News from Wyndah,* and who has taken a particular interest in calling attention to the best modernist music, and Dr. Ernest Walker, director of music at Balliol College. The latter was particularly interested in young Ornstein. He made him play for him in one of the private rooms at Balliol, and summed up his impressions of this new music in a remark to Gardiner: "I've heard something strange, strange—something that makes me feel as though all the composite particles of the world were crumbling!" Its intellectual society

and its delightful vernal surroundings made Oxford a source of true inspiration to the composer, as it has been to many artists before him. He spent a good part of his time wandering in and out of the rooms of the collegians, playing for them and discussing music in general and his own theories in particular. All was charmingly informal, stimulating, suggestive. And at Oxford Ornstein found the incentive to complete his *13th Psalm*. Yet, though the days of his Oxford stay were drawing to a close, his English friends were not yet content to have him return to Paris.

Mr. Roger Quilter, of whose amiable qualities of heart and mind Ornstein speaks with real appreciation, insisted on his coming to London. During an evening at Quilter's home he played for the English composer and his mother on a fine Bechstein and, after dinner, in the course of a discussion with a young painter who happened in, his attention was first called to William Blake. What he heard excited his interest in the highest degree; he read everything there was to be had of Blake's, and pored over his designs, notably those for Robert Blair's *The Grave* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* as well as the splendid series illustrating *The Book of Job*. His instant sympathy with the artist-poet's ability to seize "the pictorial element of ideas, simple or sublime, and translate them into the appropriate language of sense," has been reflected in the tremendous sonata for violin and piano, Op. 31, which, together with three songs, as yet unpublished, were its first fruits. Through the kindness of Mr. Quilter, Ornstein made a number of interesting acquaintances while in London, among them Robin Legge, of the *Daily Telegraph,* for whom he played at a tea; the great Sargeant, Arthur Shattuck, and Mr. Winthrop L. Rogers, the publisher, a fine violinist and a music-lover keenly interested in all new developments. And—Ornstein's first London recital was arranged.

It took place on March 27, 1914, at Steinway Hall, and unchained a flood of derisory comment. On January 14 of the same year, Arnold Schönberg had himself conducted at a Saturday afternoon Symphony Concert a performance of his *Five Orchestral Pieces,* which had already been hissed when heard in the same city in 1912, and on their second hearing had secured a lukewarm *succèss d'estime.* It was declared that it was completely impossible to follow him in "his last and really hideous negations." And Ornstein's *Sonata,* Op. 35, *Wild Men's Dance, Impressions of Notre-Dame* and of the *Thames, Moods,* Op. 22; *Six Short Pieces,* Op. 19, and *Prelude,* Op. 20, No. 2, were at once declared "equal to the sum of Schönberg and Scriabin squared" (the fact that he played a group of Schönberg piano pieces at his recital gave point to the assertion), and the former were accused of being "poor futurists" compared to their composer. One reviewer painted the unhappy situation of the "poor critic," whose ears were "not only assaulted by strange sounds defying any form of classification, but who, robbed of road-maps and sign-posts, was to wander in a new and wholly unfamiliar country without so much as a guide-book to assist him." The four movements of his *Sonata* "sounded like four separate spasms of a mental anguish too great to be borne." Full tribute, however, was paid his gifts as a pianist (particularly in his playing of *Three Chorales* by Bach, transcribed by Busoni); yet as regards the impression made by his own music, it seemed to be the general opinion of the press that "if the hallmark of greatness is laughter, Mr. Ornstein may be hailed as a genius." The critic of the London *Observer* went even further. "We have never suffered from such insufferable hideousness, expressed in terms of so-called music." Yet even he admitted that "the skill that could devise the cacophonous, unrhythmic, unmusical always, two-penny colored rubbish

which Leo Ornstein drove with his Nasmyth-hammer action into the heads of a long-suffering audience on Friday was stupendous!"

There was significance, however, in the statement of the *London Daily Telegraph* that though nothing in so "advanced" a form had been heard in London before, "yet the audience remained to the end, hypnotized as a rabbit by a snake." It was a genuine tribute to the fact that in this new musical speech, which defied analysis on a first hearing and was intelligible only to the initiate, there dwelt an accent of truth and conviction, which in itself held the attention and precluded any denial of the artist's sincerity. The recital aroused great discussion and musicians of standing fell foul of each other in debating the pros and cons of the principles it had revealed. More or less vague and elastic terms, such as futurism, cubism, post-impressionism were generously used, all parties concerned, as is usual in æsthetic discussions, proving their cases with great ingenuity to their own satisfaction. But the ice had been broken, Ornstein had secured an audience and a future as a concertizing pianist doubled by a composer: one who, while devoting himself generally to the cause of modern music as an interpreting artist, would also be able to bring his own musical message to the attention of the musical world. And, immediately after this first recital, the publication of the *Preludes,* the *Impressions de Notre-Dame,* the *Dwarf Suite,* the *Impressions de la Tamise,* the *Wild Men's Dance, Three Burlesques* and the *String Quartet* was arranged.

The issue of various works was to be of great moment to the young composer. They afforded the serious musician an opportunity of studying his artistic ends and aims, and brought his music to the attention of many who had not heard him play. After his first London recital Ornstein returned to Paris and thence, in April, he went back

to London to play his second recital there on the 7th of the same month.

This second recital, like its predecessor, was announced as one of "Futuristic Music," and its program was made up entirely of the composer's own music, including the *Dwarf Suite,* two sets of *Impressions,* the *Two Shadow Pieces,* Op. 17; the *Eleven Short Pieces,* Op, 29; the *Moods, Preludes* and *Burlesques,* Op. 22, 20 and 30, and the *Wild Men's Dance.* Again "the majority of the audience were inclined to treat the recital as a joke," and there were hissings and cat-calls. But there were also more to realize that the new composer was to be reckoned with as a force, that he was saying new things in a new way because impelled by his artistic conscience, that although setting at defiance existing harmonic law, he was giving his auditors music which, to quote *The London Musical Standard,* had "that germ of realism and humanity which is indicative of genius on the part of its composer."

The composer himself was not dismayed by the flood of adverse criticism which endeavored to belittle his work. He knew that he was giving sincere expression to his emotions in music, and realized that an idiom as novel as his own, more direct than that of Schönberg, and (in spite of analogies) established on altogether different principles, could not find acceptance at a moment's notice. And, singularly free from the vanity of small minds, he had a sense of humor which permitted him to enjoy a clever hit at his own expense. Aside from this, there was the consciousness that musicians of real distinction, men in whose technical and æsthetic judgment he could place reliance, took his art-effort seriously, and though, in some cases, their approval was more or less qualified, regarded it as worthy of the respect that any new departure which has a real inner meaning and coherency deserves, though these may not be at once obviously apparent.

After his second London recital Ornstein returned to America. But before this he had composed his piano quintet and his symphonic poem, *The Fog.* In the United States, upon his return, he gave a series of recitals in the South and made his way to Blue Hills in June. In September it had been his intention to go to Norway to play a series of forty concerts in that country, but the outbreak of the European war led to the cancellation of the *tournée;* and he continued to work at composition and as a concert pianist until January, 1915.

It was during January and February of that year that he gave the now celebrated series of recitals at the Bandbox Theatre, New York, in which he braved conventional program-making by presenting four programs made up entirely of ultra-modern piano music, his own and that of others. Here were presented the results of the time and devotion he had given in Paris and London to absorbing the work of the most notable and noteworthy of its exponents—he had practically memorized all that Ravel and Debussy had written for the instrument. At the first recital—to quote A. Walter Kramer, "the modernity of the program could have been gauged, when it is recorded that Debussy served as the Haydn of the afternoon"—there were heard the *D Minor Sonata* of Eric Korngold, Maurice Ravel's *Sonatina,* Arnold Schönberg's *Three Piano Pieces,* Op. 11; Albeñiz's *Iberia,* Grondahl's *Impromptu on a Negro Motive,* Cyril Scott's *Danse Négre,* and the first series of Debussy's *Images.* In addition the composer played his own *Impressions de la Tamise,* his *Wild Men's Dance,* and his *Improvisata.*

At the second recital César Franck's *Prelude, Chorale* and *Fugue,* Cyril Scott's *Impressions of the Jungle,* Debussy's second series of *Images,* Schönberg's *Six Short Pieces,* Op. 19, and a tone-poem, *Pan,* by the Bohemian composer, Vitezlav Novák, according to another critic

"served but as *hors d'œuvre* and dessert to the main item of the bill, which was Mr. Ornstein's *Dwarf Suite.*"

This last group of numbers attracted far more attention than any of the other pieces on the program. It was received with due respect, and some who heard the composer's music for the first time, while they would not commit themselves to approval, were fair enough to recognize that a single hearing did not justify criticism or condemnation. This recital and those following filled the small playhouse to overflowing. The principal numbers, other than the composer's own, represented in the two remaining recitals were the Vincent d'Indy *Sonata,* Op. 63, Gabriel Grovlez' three *Impressions of London*—ah, so different in every respect from those of Ornstein's *Impressions de la Tamise!*—Scriabin's *Sonata* and his *Four Preludes.* Most of this music, notably Ravel's *Sonatina,* and his *Gaspard de la Nuit* (which was also played), were introduced to a New York audience for the first time. At his second recital Ornstein played his own *Preludes, Burlesques* and *Moods,* and at the third the *Two Shadow Pieces* and his *Impressions de Notre-Dame.*

The Bandbox Theatre recitals not only afforded a novel and artistically justifiable departure from program routine, they also gave proof of the intellectual and technical maturing of the composer since his European experiences. They firmly established his reputation as an artist who would have to be taken seriously both as a virtuoso and a creator. And they were the prelude to numerous concert engagements throughout the country, during which Ornstein gave much attention to Chopin interpretation. The end of the summer which, as usual, he had spent at Blue Hill, brought with it a deep sorrow for the young composer, the illness and death of Mrs. Tapper, whose interest and encouragement had been unfaltering, and who

died in Boston in September, 1915, with the knowledge that her favorite pupil had justified her fondest hopes.

The composer's sorrow may have been to some degree mitigated by the realization that he had not been unfaithful to the ideals of self-expression and artistic honesty she had inculcated. A tribute of gratitude and homage to her memory was the Chopin-Ravel recital given last March at the Princess Theatre, New York, as a contribution to the Bertha Feiring Tapper Scholarship Fund, established by pupils and friends of Mrs. Tapper. And his choice of the two composers represented was a delicate acknowledgment of the fact that in his teacher, together with a keen appreciation of the artistic ideals of the newer art, was united love and reverence for the beauty of the old.

It was on December 15, 1915, that Ornstein gave another New York recital at the Cort Theatre. Here, in addition to compositions of his own, already played, he presented the two "Vannin" numbers, *The Waltzers* and *At Night,* and offset them by Cyril Scott's *Sonata,* Op. 56; the Ravel *Sonatina* and his *Oiseaux Tristes,* Albeñiz's *Almeria and* Erick Korngold's *Fairy Pictures.* In general critics dwelt on the pianistic charm of his playing, the subtle elaboration of his effects of tone-shading, the perfection of his pedal technic, the beauty of his touch, his "ability to express design," his dynamic control. Another New York recital at Aeolian Hall (January 22, 1916) was well-nigh the concert sensation of the season. Here he skilfully heightened the effect of his "modernistic shockers" —such things as the *Marche Grotesque* and *Funeral March of the Dwarfs*—to use the phrase of an exasperated auditor, by throwing them into high relief with the interposition of pieces by Bach, Schumann, Liszt and Rubinstein, which he played with true romantic feeling and intimacy.

In February, March and April of the same year the

composer gave a series of four "Informal Recitals" in New York, at the residence of Mrs. Arthur M. Reis, in which he ran the gamut of ultra-modern piano music. At the first the *pièces de résistance* were Scriabin's *Sonata,* Op. 23; two *Preludes* and César Franck's *Prélude, Chorale et Fugue,* besides *Preludes* and an *Etude* by the first-named composer; *Two Chorales* by Moussorgsky, a, or rather *the,* Liszt *Liebestraum,* the Rubinstein *Valse Caprice* and a whole group of Debussy—*Prélude,* the *First Arabesque, Jardins sous la Pluie* and *L'Isle Joyeuse.* At the second he played the D'Indy *Sonata,* a Debussy group—*Hommage à Rameau, Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fût,* and *Poissons d'Or,* the Schönberg pieces, Op. 11; Novák's *The Sea,* and, by Ravel, the lovely *Pavane,* and the set of three *Miroirs.* The third program introduced novelties of his own as a second group—*Mélancholie, Danse Arabe* and *A la Chinoise,* as well as the *Dwarf Suite*—preceded by Scriabin *Preludes,* a *Poème* and *Guirlandes,* and a Busoni *Sonatina,* and followed by Ravel's powerful *Gaspard de la Nuit.* The concluding program of the series was devoted to the *Novi Pezzi,* by Casella; Busoni's *Elegien,* Cyril Scott's *Dance of the Elephants,* a group of six titulate *Préludes* by Debussy, the composer's own *Sonata,* Op. 25 (written during 1914), Ravel's *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales,* some Stravinsky piano pieces and his own new composition, *The Masqueraders.*

The aim of these unconventional programs was to illustrate the actual process of divergence by which pianoforte composition had moved away from the art-forms of the romantic composers to find its present contemporary mode of expression. They were programs of development intended to establish the relation and inner logic of what to many would seem to represent only radically unmotived departures from the accepted norms. The composer took part in an informal discussion after each

recital—a possibility, since the attendance at the series was limited to an audience of some fifty professionals and music-lovers.

The summer of 1916 the composer spent at Deer Isle, Maine, composing, practising and reading proof on various of his compositions in press at the time. His work as a concert pianist during the winter of 1916 and the spring of 1917 may be said to have placed him well within the rank of contemporary piano virtuosi, and shows beyond possibility of doubt his perfected mastery of the keyboard and his increasing reputation as a shining luminary among the elect of ultra-modern composition.

The summer of 1917 he is again spending at Deer Isle, Maine, where he finds the absolute quiet he needs for his work and reading. He is an omnivorous reader and declares that he is "thoroughly unhappy" unless he gets a certain amount of real reading done in the course of every twenty-four hours—modern literature, modern history, political economy in its latest phases—for Ornstein is not only a modernist in music! And there we may leave him while we attempt to outline his philosophy of music, the motives and incentives which lead him to think and to write music as he does, the ideas that underlie his whole creative effort and give it the individual note which distinguishes it from that of his contemporaries in the field of ultra-modern composition.

HIS IDEAS

Leo Ornstein may be ahead of his time. I am inclined to think that he is ushering in a new epoch; that he is employing his genius toward the attainment of a new musical expression—an expression which, perhaps not permanent in itself, must play an important rôle in the development of the music of years to come. . . . His music is color—for that is the basis on which he builds.

A. WALTER KRAMER.

II.

HIS IDEAS

THE word "ideas" is a term capable of many definitions. In speaking of the ideas of Leo Ornstein we are dealing with formative ideas—not mere images or transcripts, but types of ideals. They represent, in music, his conception of what is from his individual standpoint as a creating artist supremely excellent or desirable. And, like all new ideas or ideals which, since the beginning of time, have come into conflict with other ideas or ideals already established and more or less crystallized as dogma, they have aroused much antagonism and resentment on the one hand, while finding enthusiastic support on the other.

We have in music a whole vocabulary of words which are employed to summarize, more or less clearly, the departures made during the last fifteen or sixteen years from the theories of the past. We speak of "modernism" and "ultra-modernism," of "realism" *(verismo)*, of "impressionism" and "post-impressionism," of "pointillism," of "cubism" and "futurism." Ornstein has, at one time or another, and by one or another critic, been classed as an exponent of nearly every one of these newer trends of musical development. Of all these terms, the expression "futurist" has been, perhaps, most improperly used in connection with the composer. "Futurism," in a more contemporary sense, epitomizes the aims of the Italian and French artists who, rejecting all convention and technic, employ imitative megaphonic instruments to "express the geometric and mechanical splendor of numerical sensibility" in sound. And with this recondite

aim Ornstein has nothing in common. As he himself says: "Futurism is not even a name to me. If my music becomes more generally understood at some future time, perhaps, from that point of view it might be called futuristic music. *All that I am attempting to do is to express myself as honestly and convincingly as I can in the present.*"

Here we have a direct summing up of Ornstein's own ideas and ideals—self-expression, sincere and without conditions. In the development of what he regards as his more truly "idiomatic" works, it is true that, like Schönberg and Satie, he has thrown overboard traditional form and the diatonic centre, concentrating on color and rhythm; yet harmonic principles underlie all his sonal combinations. It is their application, novel even to the ear accustomed to Scriabine and Ravel which, like everything that is new in the sense of being difficult to establish by analogy with that which has gone before, defers a more general and immediate appreciation of his music. It represents, as Charles L. Buchanan says, "technically speaking, nothing more or less than an acute intensification of the harmonic sense of music." All that the composer has written in what may be called his "second manner" (wherein might be included the "Vannin" pieces, digressing, yet akin to it), reflects his fundamental belief that "music must primarily be felt, not analyzed."

Many of those who are not in sympathy with Ornstein's ideals have denied their validity by decrying the composer's artistic honesty. Frederick Corder* declares that, "finding the production of sheer nonsense both easy and profitable, Schönberg actually had followers in the persons of Bela Bartok and Leo Ornstein, . . . but the productions of Ornstein and Bartok were mere ordure; it was

* "On the Cult of Wrong Notes," by Frederick Corder. The Musical Quarterly, July, 1915.

impossible for a musical person to tolerate, much less pretend to admire them." To question the sincerity of what we do not understand, or do not wish to understand, may be natural, yet it hardly deserves to be called criticism, at least not in a constructive sense. And how may we expect sympathy or even intelligent interest in any newer art development from one who speaks of "the crazy crowd of whom Claude Debussy is the chief" and who, in surveying the progress of music during the nineteenth century, adds: "In England, finally, our dull time, in which Bennett and Macfarren afforded a feeble illumination, was followed by a generation which included Parry, Mackenzie, Stanford, Cowen and myself? One cannot say we flourished, but we were graciously endured for a while; till Holbrooke, Cyril Scott and a raw band of amateurs" (we presume it included such men as Elgar, Granville, Bantock, Arnold Bax, Balfour Gardiner, John Ireland, Ralph Vaughn Williams, and the like) "found more favor in the eyes of the critics." Mr. Corder was born in 1852.

Charles L. Buchanan is a critic of a different type. In a serious study* he speaks of Ornstein as possessing "to a large extent that indefinable clairvoyant quality that is present in all vital art," yet expresses the fear that Ornstein's music shows tendencies which seem to him to be dangerously in the direction of an exclusive preoccupation with mood at the expense of thought." And he puts the question, "Can a substantial, authentic musical message proclaim itself through a medium essentially suggestive rather than definite?" Perhaps the best answer to this question has, unconsciously, been given in advance by Paul L. Rosenfeld.** In discussing the movement entitled

* "Futurist Music," by Charles L. Buchanan. The Independent, July 31, 1916.

** "Ornstein," by Paul L. Rosenfeld. The New Republic, May 27, 1916.

Love, in the piano sonata, Op. 25, Mr. Rosenfeld says: "It tells its tale: it is silent; and while one speculates whether it is music or not, one discovers that he has heard real episodes out of the life of the composer, and perhaps through him, episodes out of the lives of a whole upgrowing generation."

It is true that Ornstein's "ultra-modernist" music is pure emotion in tone, selfial and social, contemplative and æsthetic; it is mood precipitated in sound, according to an instinctive underlying law and theorem which the composer himself has not as yet entirely formulated and, perhaps, never will. Whether this music conveys thought more directly through an accepted symbolism of expression, or suggests thought indirectly through sheer emotional evocation, is, after all, negligible so long as its message wins through to those to whom it is addressed. And more and more are coming to understand it.

Nor is Ornstein a pedant, one who has neatly labeled his "ideas," and aspires to the chieftainship of some neo-musical tribe on the strength of them. He objects to classifications and "schools" of musical creative endeavor. Every individual should try to solve the psychic problems of the material himself—to penetrate into every material manifestation of life, and know its soul. "Bach and César Franck are to me the two greatest musicians, because they, above all others, lift the veil of the material and disclose its essential soul." Ornstein gives his message for what it is worth to those who care to hear it. This message, in the opinion of some, is one altogether fraught with gloom and despair. There has been a cry against Ornstein because of his unmerciful sincerity, because he has not wrapped his emotions in the cloak of convention. Even a composer like Bloch has accused Ornstein of "writing music that was too sad and melancholy," missing the whole point at issue, that Ornstein invariably writes as he feels,

and that when he feels deeply he cannot convey his feelings in weak and anæmic sentimentalities, draped in all sorts of diatonic reticences, but gives them as they are—in all their pathos and poignancy, naked and unashamed. Nor are all his moods tragic ones, all his tonal landscapes overgrown with the cypress and the yew—there is ample published evidence to the contrary. But when he does write in the tragic vein, it is in accord with his theory that by the expression of deep grief the soul becomes purified and gains the illumination of true beauty.

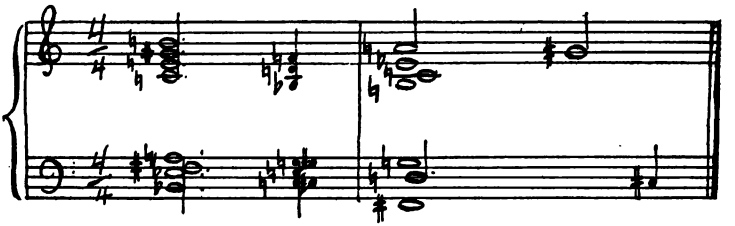
As has been mentioned, he found himself, after he had written much music in the major-minor system, employing traditional forms, at a serious loss to express in music those deeper and more intimate emotions and reactions within him which clamored for utterance. And then, after unhappy weeks of hopelessness and disorientation, of groping and experiment, it came to him with overwhelming suddenness—that he had discovered the alphabet of a new tongue, a tonal language which enabled him to give his inspiration the freest rein in sound expression. The firstling of the new dispensation was the initial chord of what is now *The Funeral March of the Dwarves.* Then came *The Wild Men's Dance* and the *Dwarf Suite;* and in these compositions, each conceived and carried out at a white heat without interruption, we have all the outward and visible signs of the new inward and spiritual grace which the composer had found, and which he perfected in their successors. The composer's own explanation of the extreme radicalism of his music, which differentiated from all other, the primary reason for its intensely individual note is interesting. "When I began to compose, I had practically not been influenced by any current music." The only modern compositions which Ornstein had actually seen when he began to write in his second manner were Dubussy's *Reflets dans l'eau* and a *Rhapsody* by Max Reger.

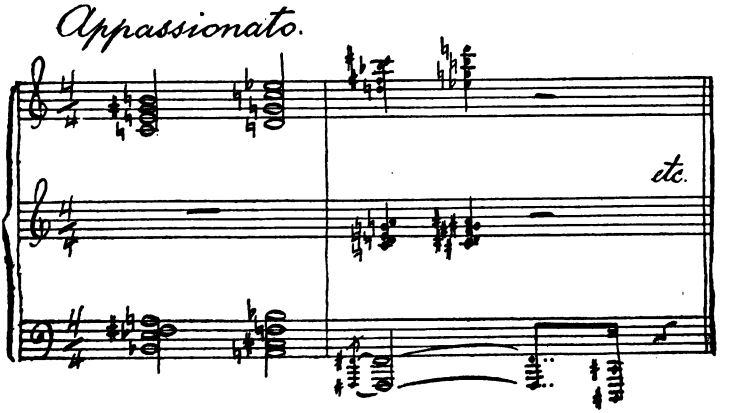
FUNERAL MARCH

The pieces already mentioned *(The Wild Men's Dance* and the *Dwarf Suite)* may be taken to illustrate Ornstein's method of composition. Like practically all that he has done, they were written at one sitting, to stand or fall as first set down. Ornstein never composes "at the piano." His whole intricate and complex harmonic and rhythmic scheme is developed in his mind, and often he dare lose no time in setting it down on paper before its outlines grow dim. Many of his compositions are programmatic; yet he often hesitates to give them too definite a title, since "to others my piece may suggest something entirely different from the picture or mood I had in mind when writing it; and their imaginings may be quite as appropriate and legitimate as the one I had intended. I am even free to say that I have heard certain interpretations of my compositions by other pianists, which struck me as being more fine and effective than my own conception of the same pieces." And not infrequently the composer destroys what he has written, for he is a severe self-critic and does not think it worth while preserving anything that seems below the standards he has set himself.

To return to *The Wild Men's Dance, A la Chinoise* and the *Dwarf Suite,* which so admirably typify Ornstein's ideas of composition. In them the diatonic system, the tonic and dominant idea of chord relationship is entirely abandoned. A subtle musical intuition seems to prompt their extremely plastic resolutions, which are the reflection of a logic of emotion—if one may so call it—rather than of mathematical design. Here we have the direct antithesis of Schönberg, between whom and Ornstein it is possible to draw some analogies—Ornstein's harmonies are the natural and unalloyed result of his unfettered creative impulse, innocent of any preconceived theory; Schönberg, on the other hand, works in accord with an abstruse and mysterious musical calculus known only to

himself. For Ornstein there exist no actual chords or discords. His chord combinations are not the conscious reflexion of a definite theoretic basis, but the outcome of the impulse for a richer, fuller tonal coloring, one which extends the possibilities of pure harmony far beyond the limits of the diatonic system.

And, as the illustrations following will show, his chordal resolutions "are not dictated by mere technical *formulæ,* but by the purpose of the thought and the intensity of the mood they seek to establish." Thus in *Triste:*

REFLECTIVE MOOD

we have a chord resolved according to the elemental or rather emotional, logic which the mood development dictates. In

TRAGIC MOOD

we have an altogether different resolution of the same chord, again compelled by mood instead of the accepted laws of modulation. "This principle"—that of emotional logic—is, according to Ornstein, "if not my only, at any rate my supreme reason for resolving certain chords into others as I do. The resolution is the outcome of the image, color scheme, design, etc., that I try to project in my composition."

And the composer is frank in saying of his "second manner" of musical speech: "I honestly find this the most logical and direct idiom through which to express my musical impulse, thought and feeling. I cannot help contrasting it with one representing a compromise with traditional formulas which often react unfavorably on my spontaneity of inspiration. I find that existing tonal idioms do not allow me the perfect expression of all that I wish to say musically. And I have had to find a language of my own. Yet I feel that, once its underlying basis is understood, this language will be listened to, and my work will be clear to many who do not grasp its meaning now."

The composer adds: "I have my diatonic and lyric moments, and on occasion I employ the diatonic scale for the simple reason that my own radical medium does not suit the purpose of what I want to say." This does not apply to his earlier works alone, the *Serenade,* Op. 5, No. 1, and *Scherzino,* Op. 5, No. 2; *Russian Suite, Cossack Impressions, Six Lyric Pieces, Miniatures* and others, which antedate his later manner. There are moods perhaps less intimate in a personal way; there are emotions less complex; there are impressions whose simple lucidness does not seem to call for the richer chromaticism and more varied and intricate tonal weave which is Ornstein's very own. The *Sonata* for violin and piano, Op. 26, makes this clear, as do some of the songs. In this, as in all else

he does, Ornstein is entirely honest. He writes in his two manners at will, according to whichever best lends itself to his purposes at the moment.

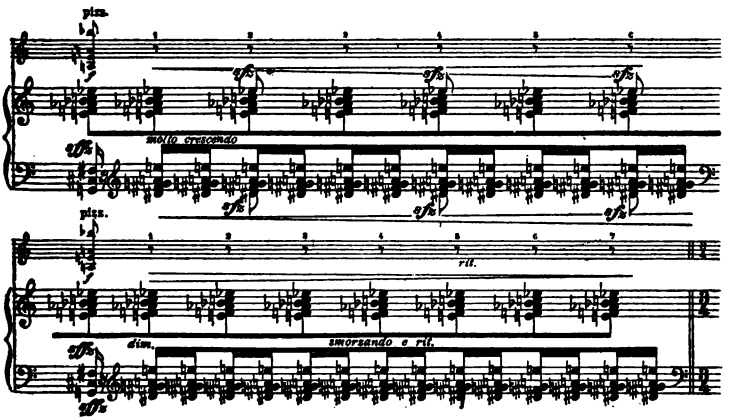
Ornstein's genuine gifts have secured, and have continued to secure, acceptance and publicity for anything and everything he chooses to write along "major and minor" lines. Yet, even in a utilitarian way, his faith in himself and his more radical ideals has already been justified by the increasing success of his more intimate and emotionally advanced musical works. He still makes occasional excursions into the diatonic field, but it is only when he feels the direct impulse that he reverts to it, and when this is the case he invariably produces something worth while.

As he puts it: "There are moments when only a purely diatonic idiom will serve to express my ideas. Nothing irritates me more than to have a composer claim the modernity of his music as a virtue. A statement of the kind is rank heresy, since the sincere composer does not choose a medium—the medium chooses him. He is compelled to use it. If I had found it possible to express all that I thought and felt diatonically, I should not have had to resort to the 'radical' idiom which those who do not understand it condemn. Can you imagine *The Wild Men's Dance* and other things of mine expressed in the tonality of B major?"

At the same time the composer's "diatonic moments" are not his only lyric ones. He has written much music essentially lyric in his later manner—the *Sonata* for violin and piano, Op. 26; the *Arabesques,* the *Poems of 1917* and the *Sonata* for 'cello and piano, Op. 45. "It is when I am in search of softer and gentler color effects that I resort to the use of the diatonic scale."

Nor, even in his own more intimate expressional mode, does he lose his sense of proportion. As he says: "I *do*

compromise to the degree that in writing for the piano I realize its limitations, as I realize their limitations when writing for the voice or for the strings. These limitations I accept—for the artist must have a perfect understanding of his material—and without due regard for them my music cannot penetrate the listener so that he is able to judge as to the validity of my creative impulse."

The erroneous impression prevails that, more or less, Ornstein's later piano music is difficult with a difficulty quite beyond the limitations of the instrument. Yet—once understood—as he says: "My piano music is as easy to play and memorize as that of Liszt. My pianoforte *Sonata,* for example, is no more exacting than Liszt's *Don Juan* fantasy. The 'note clusters' which I use and whose use has been reprehended, represent a perfectly logical anticipation of overtones." Ornstein, when he told the writer this, offered the following illustration from his *Sonata,* Op. 31:

to prove that his anticipation of the overtones, by actual playing, enabled him to secure a certain depth of tone and an effect of "clouded sonority" which it was impos-

sible to realize in any other way. "If you were to strip the color elements from one of my chords, you would find its actual structure one of Grecian severity of outline. But it requires study to distinguish between the fundamental tones and those purely incidental."

Form may be said to be viewed by Ornstein somewhat in the nature of a collection of building laws which he regards only when they serve his convenience. The camp of the Roman legion was invariably laid out in the same manner, whether in Persia or Pannonia; but the legion of Ornstein's notes must camp as their originator listeth, and not according to the time-honored laws of musical engineering tactics. Ornstein does not run his inspiration into molds, but allows it to shape its flow as it must and will, and this makes its form entirely subordinate to its own impulse. This is noticeable in many of the shorter compositions, but we may take the sonata form as an example of his whole attitude toward the architecture of music. He does not see in the sonata a preconceived mold or casing into which his inspiration must be wedged. He recognizes a distinct difference between sonata music and all other music—but the difference for him lies purely in content and not in form. Thus the Schumann *G Minor Sonata,* written in strict sonata form, to Ornstein is not sonata music; while the same composer's *F Sharp Minor Sonata,* though much freer in style, impresses him at once as true sonata music. In his own *Sonata,* Op. 31, which is certainly not a sonata in any formal sense of the word, Ornstein uses the title "owing to a certain classical severity of spirit it possesses, which has nothing to do with period, and which distinguished this kind of music from others."

Much of the color that lends so rich a glow to Ornstein's concepts has a Greek or an Asiatic base. The impression made upon him by the music of the Greek and

Armenian Churches and the Hebrew chant has already been mentioned. As he himself says: "There is hardly a composition of mine which fails to offer proof of what a lasting and thorough impression Greek ritual music and the Asiatic chant have made upon me, though I have never exploited traditional 'themes' or 'material.'"

We have already intimated that Ornstein is by no means narrow in his musical sympathies. His stand is in keeping with his whole theory that the brotherhood of man (at present, alas, so far from being realized!) has an analogy in a corresponding brotherhood of tone: that there is no one tone, no combination of tones, but which is related to all others. It is merely a question of discovering their connecting ties. To quote Ornstein once again: "Perhaps these affinities cannot be mathematically demonstrated; this does not mean to say that they do not exist, for there is an inner psychic, emotional relationship which transcends all others in importance."

What is Ornstein's attitude toward his modernistic brothers-in-arms, whose music he has so widely and generously exploited, and to the great ones of the past? Bach, first of all, Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, Tschaikovsky—all find a place in his heart and on his programs.

But, with the exception of Bach and Chopin, they do not mean to him what Franck, Ravel, Debussy, Stravinsky, Scriabine, Schönberg, Cyril Scott do. Ornstein has often been spoken of as an imitator of Schönberg; yet *The Wild Men's Dance,* and others of his more individual compositions, had been written before he had ever seen or heard anything by the Viennese composer. As a matter of fact, despite surface resemblances, the two have little in common. As Ornstein says: "It is but necessary to compare a page of my music with that of Schönberg to see the vast difference between their concept and methods of expression." From Ornstein's standpoint Arnold Schönberg

is a cold, analytical geometrician, who dissects every detail of life and photographs it on music paper. Stravinsky he regards as Schönberg's direct opposite, a vital genius who is in full sympathy with life, and regives it in tone; though Ornstein feels, perhaps, that his music, unlike his own, does not enter as intimately into the commonplaces of existence. Debussy and Chopin he brackets as well-nigh perfect, each in his own manner, since each realizes his own limitations and does not strive to exceed them. In Florent Schmitt he sees a combination of the good and bad qualities of Debussy and Ravel. But, fond as he is of Debussy, with Harold Bauer and Rudolph Ganz Ornstein agrees in regarding Ravel as the greater composer. He has lived more intensively and gets at the very core of life, which Debussy sees through the medium of poetic introspection. To Ornstein their beauty differs only in degree. "Ravel's music has the beauty of realism, Debussy's that of poesy. All truth is beautiful to me and both have the beauty of truth, only that Debussy gives us the truth of fancy and Ravel that of actuality." Among the Russians Ornstein admires, in particular, Moussorgsky, "the father of modern music," and Scriabine. In the latter Ornstein sees another great artist who created his art out of life, a composer who had reached a point where he had grown so sensitive to sorrow that he was hardly able to make his grief articulate. Albeñiz's music Ornstein likes. The latter's *Iberia,* which he calls "very vulgar but full of honest realism and a humanity which saves it from being banal," is one of his favorites. Of Cyril Scott, his fellow modernist, he frankly says that, in his opinion, "he has written much poor music and some that is excellent. At a second glance much that he has done is far less original than one might think. His *Sonata* for piano, Op. 63, is very fine. Scott sent it to me when I was in London—and I did not like it. A year later I

looked it over again in New York and was surprised to discover a number of beautiful pages. It it absolute music of a high type and I have played it both in New York and Boston."

We have quoted these opinions of Ornstein to give an idea of his catholicity of taste, his genuine interest in what his contemporaries are doing to find their own salvation and that of their art in individual development. An article by the composer in a recent issue of *The Seven Arts* on *The Music of the New Russia* not alone emphasizes this attitude of mind, but also throws an interesting light on his own philosophy of tone. What he says of Moussorgsky, for instance, might be quite as appositely applied to himself. "The distinctive quality of the new impulse in art has been the need of expression through direct contact with the emotions—a rediscovery and restatement of men's experience. Art has torn itself from the admitted routines and honored idioms; it has come to realize the inadequacy of conceiving modern life according to the old and accepted *formulæ!*"

And again: "Music has become too finished, too mechanically perfect. So little has been left to the imagination of the listener that he is no longer required to create *toward* the artist. In all epochs of great musical art—the epoch of Bach, the epoch of César Franck, for instance—it was realized that the province of art was not to instil a passive pleasure in the listener. Great music must wake in us a creative impulse. Unless it does that, it has failed to fulfil its destiny."

This question of the listener creating *toward* the artist is one which has largely preoccupied Ornstein, and is a factor in all his creative work. The music-lover, the auditor, from his standpoint, should not content himself with the passive sensuous enjoyment of a shower-bath of sound. The appeal of Ornstein's music is made directly

to the imagination of the listener; he strives to intensify and perfect the expression of emotion to such a degree that those who hear it react creatively; that is, are awakened to a definite individual concept and appreciation of its meaning. As the composer himself has already said, he does not expect the listener to feel his music exactly as he himself feels it; even as regards his *pièces à programme* he understands that there are bound to be as many variants as there are individual listeners. But since his music stands for the actual embodiment in tone of various phases of his own emotional life, he asks of those who hear or study his music to bring to its hearing or playing some of that psychic sympathy which is the common property of all beings who are capable of feeling emotion. Only the very poor in spirit will find that this appeal awakens, in some one way or another, no answering chord in their own breast; only in those to whom psychic emotion is a mere phrase, who cannot define it by their own experience, will its vibrations rouse no intimate overtone. And this, again, is in accord with the composer's dictum: "The less important thing is whether or no beautiful music be written. The vital issue is to write music which is sincere, which has in it the germ of individual emotional vitality; for, after all, emotional comprehension is localized within the individual consciousness." And we might close this *résumé* of Ornstein's ideas and ideals in composition with the short *Credo,* which in a manner epitomizes his philosophy: "It is my aim to express life in music as I perceive it."

HIS WORK

For those—and their number grows continually—who have mastered Ornstein's idiom sufficiently to come to an understanding of the content of his art and the quality of the human experience there transmuted into sound, the form is little short of perfect. . . . An interpretation of the facets of life revealed by this new music remains the soundest of approaches to a comprehension of it.

PAUL L. ROSENFELD.

III.

HIS WORK

BY their works shall ye know them." The scriptural injunction applies to composers as well as to all other workers, and Ornstein's creative output represents the practical development of his ideas, the tally of actual accomplishment, without which all theory is but barren speculation. Nearest at hand and logically calling for first consideration are his pianoforte compositions. The piano is the composer's own instrument, and in his piano music his ideals and ideas find their most direct and generally available exposition.

And since, in a degree, his piano compositions are so closely linked with his work as an interpreting artist, their consideration might well be prefaced by some remarks on the composer as a pianist. The adequacy of his technical equipment is not to be questioned. As A. Walter Kramer has summed it up: "Of his pianism nothing need be said but that he plays superbly, in a manner that leaves no doubt as to his position among present-day virtuosi. But he is more than that, he is a personality." Now, a personality, especially on the concert platform, lays himself open to the suspicion of being a *poseur* by the least departure from the canons of the conventional. The incidentals of his manner of playing, the length of his hair or the cut of his nails, are scrupulously examined as regards their conformity to accepted usage; any departure therefrom is set down as a love for affectation and sensationalism which, more or less, questions the artist's sincerity.

Those who know Ornstein personally are aware that

there is no suspicion of pose in the unconscious mannerisms which are revealed in his playing in public. To quote Mr. Kramer once more: "They are part of Leo Ornstein, and Leo Ornstein is important enough to be considered seriously even if he does toss his head at the close of a composition." Yet the details of his technical presentation at the keyboard have furnished matter for abundant discussion.

Leo Ornstein at the piano has often been limned in picturesque phrase. Huneker says: "Yet I do bewail the murderous means of expression with which Leo Ornstein patrolled the piano. He stormed its keys, scooping chunks of slag and spouting scoriæ like a vicious volcano." He attests: "I was stunned, especially after *glissandi* that ripped up the keyboard and fizzed and foamed over the stage"—feeling, no doubt, like another commentator on whom Ornstein's playing had made "the unique impression of a grand piano frothing at the mouth." Yet Huneker does not neglect to pay tribute to the player's "liquid touch," and declares "his tone is rich, massive, his color scheme varied, his phrasing musical, subtle," and insists that "he is that rare thing—an individual pianist." Farnsworth Wright states that Ornstein's idea "seems to be to hit the note with that part of the hand which is nearest," to "use the knuckle, the flat of the thumb or the palm of the hand; and take a crack at the notes with the back of the wrist if you want to, but not to strike the keys with the foot, and never, never follow the established rules of technique." He admits at the same time that "it is doubtful whether Ornstein's music can be played according to anapests, dithyrambs and bimetrical or tri-metrical rules."

Again, at one of his London concerts a critic spoke of "the appalling noise" Ornstein generated by "a method quite new" to him. "It was produced by putting the

fingers close together, stiffening the hands and striking alternately down on the keyboard perpendicularly in ramrod fashion as hard as possible, with the loud pedal down. Another startling effect was produced by slapping the upper notes of the keyboard and hitting out with the left hand at some notes—it did not seem to matter which—in the bass." Even if this somewhat exaggerated description were exact in every detail, the fact remains that technique is, in the broader sense, incidental—it is the attainment of the effect desired itself that counts, not the means of attainment.

And H. T. Parker, writing in the Boston *Transcript*, allows for the fact "that what some have called and will call tricks of manner seem to others only habit that was once careless and is now settled. Sometimes, for example, he crouches with bent shoulders over the keyboard until his face seems almost buried in it. Again, when he is using the lowest bass or the highest treble, he turns himself, as it were, into the corner of the instrument where the respective keys lie; and he has a curious idiosyncracy of playing with one foot poised in air before he lets it fall upon a pedal. He also, and visibly, can gather the whole muscular and nervous strength of his tense young body and launch it, as in a flash, upon his music and piano. He does all these things, however, in a matter-of-fact fashion, as though they were as natural to him as the reticent and retiring fashion in which he acknowledges applause."

We should not forget to register a recipe offered by the *Australian Music News* of February 1, 1916, for the performance of Ornstein's music, according to that paper's conception of Ornstein's technique: "Always wear boxing-gloves when you set out to play Ornstein's music in public. They will be of great assistance in the actual performance; they will come in very handy afterward—

when the audience sets out to express its views of what you have been playing." This recipe, by the way, was adopted recently for a humorous musical "take-off" of the pianist presented at a meeting of the New York Bohemians, and none enjoyed it more than the young Russian composer-pianist.

But we will let Ornstein speak for himself with regard to two important phases of his technic: "One of the most interesting statements I have ever heard anent pianoforte playing was Leschetiszky's remark to me that 'Half a pianist's technic lies in the pedals.' It took a long time before I thoroughly understood what he meant. It was while experimenting with the music of Debussy and Ravel that I first realized how impossible it was to give a satisfactory performance with the fingers only. For months I labored until I had devised a system which established absolute sympathy between pedal-work and finger-work. And then I found that the color possibilities of the instrument were practically limitless. By delicate manipulation of the pedals I found I could melt shade into shade in infinite variation of the dynamic tone-palette. But first I had learned to breathe with the music, so to say, to let the pedal pulsate with my own emotional perception. It is not enough to thrust down the pedal with the foot and change with new harmonies. I found that by using half and even a quarter of my pedal I could produce the most delicate tonal tinges. The psychological moment comes when you strike the key, after having prepared your attack by lifting and shutting off the damper. It is a very delicate process, and months passed before I had secured absolute coördination of finger- and foot-work. Relaxation and manner of attack also have much to do with a varied tone-production; yet fundamentally I believe that the preparation of the pedal to receive the stroke of the finger is the most important factor.

"Quite often, in playing my own pieces, I use the palm of the hand. But I use it merely as a matter of convenience, since in many cases it would be physically out of the question for me to play the chord in any other way. And often I secure a heightened brilliancy which I may desire. Strange to say, the body of chord sound produced in this manner is less harsh than would be the case if the notes were played with the fingers, for in throwing the whole palm of the hand on the keys my invariable tendency is to relax."

Ornstein's color sense, his marvelous mastery of touch graduation and tonal nuance and shading in playing, his absolute control of pedal possibilities and his successful exploitation of every elusive and colorful keyboard means; his singing development of what (in his connection) have been termed "the head-tones of the piano," his use of "a pressure touch in pianissimo," the glow, the plangency of a piano tone whose "long sweep, sustained volume and reverberant climax has become more and more supple in the play of ornament, more even and transparent in runs, more liquid in arpeggi, more crisp in octaves, more sparkling in the light fioriture of the piano," have been exemplified not alone in the playing of his own compositions.

As might be expected, the great modernists are close to his heart. But then, so is all great music. Bach, the universal, César Franck, Debussy, Chopin and Schönberg, Stravinsky and Ravel, in his estimation "the two greatest geniuses of Europe," are represented on his unconventional programs together with Albeñiz, Cyril Scott, Paul Dukas, Scriabin, Bela-Bartok, MacDowell and any newer work, no matter by whom composed, which Ornstein's inner artistic conviction regards worthy the attention of the general public. Ornstein's Bach and Chopin interpretations have been made the subject of more or less criticism, and not without some semblance of validity. Yet

it should be remembered that no pianist would be less likely to feel himself bound by traditions and conventions established by others than Leo Ornstein. An anarch makes his own traditions, and considering the powerful individual trend and direct sincerity of Ornstein's nature, his Bach, even though presented through the medium of Busoni's transcript, is not altogether Busoni's Bach, nor is his Chopin the Chopin of de Pachmann. Critical reservations anent Ornstein's playing of Chopin, for instance, may be justified yet, as Parker says: "Even when they depart farthest from tradition, these versions are those of an intensely individualized, susceptible and little curbed youth, who prefers in self-expression to be honest with himself and with his hearers." And "in one's twenties it is better to excel in self-assertion than to hide in tame convention—when before and in no middle distance—is high future as a pianist."

Ornstein concentrates on establishing what he calls "real balance" in his Chopin playing, and laughs at the accusation once made that he had taken all the measure lines out of Chopin's music. The musical phrase and period are his guides in the interpretation of every composer's works and not the *balken* that divide the measures.

Ornstein's fame and reputation as a pianoforte interpreter, in particular of the great modernists in music, has grown independently of his fame as a composer. The "high future" to which Mr. Parker so prophetically alludes has begun to find its realization; the "pale youth whose next recital" the *London Daily Mail* a few years ago once begged "sufferers from complete deafness to attend in numbers," because of the "engaging" spectacle presented by "this young man involved in one of his frenzied improvisations," has become the "twenty-two-year-old anarch, whose classic precision of phrase and richness of touch have placed him as a pianist in the front rank of those

now before the public." No longer do we meet with such phrases as "brutal assaults" on the piano, "expound —with the accent on the pound" and "Mr. Ornstein's noises" to describe his pianoforte playing of his own compositions. With an increasing measure of understanding of his aims and ideals, with a growing conviction of his artistic honesty and sincerity of purpose, and greater familiarity with his pianistic idiom, has come toleration, respect and, finally, admiration for his achievement.

To A. Walter Kramer belongs the credit of having been the first to signalize Ornstein's musical importance on the occasion of his initial public appearance in this, the land of his adoption. Writing in *Musical America* (July 8, 1911) of "this youth whose powers, mental and spiritual, have developed far in excess of his years," he dwells on his ability "to play with a force that is compelling, with an expression that holds tensely an audience of thousands." Where London critics saw only a "gulf of discord," or heard "the dual efforts on a pianoforte keyboard of a peripatetic cat and an infant of insufficient height and strength to hammer the notes with his fists," Mr. Kramer realized that in Ornstein's piano pieces "one is confronted with big, original musical thought, much melodic material and an unusually fine sense of harmony." And with all the eloquence of conviction he describes his playing: "With a touch that sings with surpassing beauty; such tone as is a revelation to the music-lover, since for it one could readily pardon technical imperfections. But of these there were none!" And again: "He plays as he builds his climaxes, with a *crescendo* that rises from note to note and measure to measure, until one is fairly uplifted with the thrill of it. He plays with his whole soul, with everything that is in him, working toward the outgiving of the greatest result that he can imagine, and his

fine mental personality is behind it all, regulating everything that he undertakes."

We need dwell no further on Ornstein the pianist. Is not the tale of his achievement written in the chronicles of the musical magazines and daily press? Leaving the interpreting artist for the subject-matter of his interpretations, let us turn to the consideration of his works. And for this consideration, as has been mentioned, his pianoforte compositions offer the most natural point of departure.

Ornstein's original compositions for the piano cover a wide range of mood and expression, of style and type. Among them are the numbers of his "first manner," in which the lyric element predominates, whose keynote is a certain simplicity of means and which, without pretending to the more complex thought content or technical elaboration of his later writing, are all, in a degree, touched with an individuality that makes itself felt. Even his *Pigmy Suite,* Op. 9, a set of nine easy teaching pieces, bears this out. Among these charming trifles it would be difficult to duplicate such numbers as "March" and "Merry-making" in collections of a similar general type and grade.

The three numbers of Op. 4, *Valse in G Major, Sarabande* and *A Paris Street Scene at Night,* are well within the range of the amateur of average ability. The first, a pleasing melodic fancy, built up on an organ point, and the second a sonorous and musicianly evocation of an old dance-form, do not call for special comment. The impressionistic study of the Paris *boulevards* at night, after the arc-lights have been lit, is decidedly effective, a brilliant camera-reflex bit of music of happy pungency, and the very antithesis of Debussy's vocal evocations of the Luxembourg gardens in his *Fêtes galantes.* It should be mentioned that these compositions (as well as *Three Russian Impressions* for violin and piano, Op. 37) owe their pub-

lication to the interest of that sterling musician, Mr. Wm. A. Fisher, himself a gifted composer, to whom they were first submitted, and who at once recognized their promise and accepted them for the house he represented.

The set of *Nine Miniatures for piano,* Op. 7, are worthy the attention of any pianist. They include a graceful *Valse,* in which the germ of the "note-cluster" puts in an appearance, and an exceptional *Gavotte.* Here the composer, instead of writing a conventional piece of its type, suggests a sinister and dramatic undercurrent of tragedy in his measures. One might think it a gavotte danced by Marie Antoinette at Versailles, the night before the mob hailed the royal family to Paris, with the guillotine looming up in the future.

Written at the age of fourteen, when Schumann and Tschaikovsky still influenced his thought, Ornstein's *Six Lyric Fancies,* Op. 10, without denying their inspirational parentage, are not mere imitations. They share in the generally attractive quality of all the composer's earlier writing for his instrument. *Romance triste, Capricietto* and *In modo Scarlatti* in especial are happy examples of their type. With these pieces might be mentioned the composer's *Seven Moments Musicales,* Op. 8.

The *Russian Suite,* Op. 12, which the composer played at recitals in New York (1911) and Christiania (1913), was dedicated to the Norwegian pianist Baker-Grondal, son of the composer Agatha, who also played it at Christiania during the winter of 1913. With the exception of a Schumanesque *Berceuse,* the numbers of the Suite reflect aspects of Russian peasant life: a *Doumka* with an undertone of grief ; an *Ecstase*—one thinks involuntarily, since it was written before the famous decree, of Arnold Bax's *In a Vodka Shop*—though its music, at once simpler and more ardently sensuous than that of the English modernist's piece, is imbued with quite another spirit; a *Barca-*

rolle; a typically Russian, almost Asiatic, *Mélancolie;* a *Burlesque,* which is in truth a peasant dance, and a *Chanson pathétique* (a left-hand melody, with a florid accompaniment in the right), which in mood, if not in melody, is akin to Tschaikovsky. There is little in this graceful and attractive music to identify the composer with the Notre-Dame *Impressions.* The same may be said of those happily conceived groups, the *Cossack Impressions,* Op. 14, and the *Suite Ukraine,* Op. 17.

Finally, the *Sonatina,* Op. 15 (MSS.), "lucid in melody and form," and technically not unduly difficult, is written in G sharp minor. It employs the idiom of the Greek folk-song of Asia Minor, and is frankly lyric in character, with a particularly charming final movement. Indeed, despite touches of French impressionism, it almost seems that, had Mozart been brought up in twentieth century Athens instead of Salzburg, he might have been its author.

These pieces may be said to represent the more conventional Ornstein—the Ornstein who is gracefully and completely at home in the well-beaten paths of style and harmony sanctioned by tradition. They represent, however, especially from his own point of view, a lesser phase of Ornstein's artistic nature, a gift for pastel, miniature and water color in music on the part of an artist whose more serious work demands richer means and mediums, a more untrammeled freedom in expression and larger canvases for its proper development.

It is not these compositions already considered which have led Ornstein to be called an "anarch," "the only true-blue, genuine Futurist composer alive," and an "agent for the spread of evil doctrines in musical art." The works which have established his reputation as a composer of individually modernistic ideals and trend are those in which he gives free rein to his inspiration without regard

for rule and, according to those who do not understand them, without rhyme or reason.

The best-known and, hence, perhaps, offering the nearest point of departure for an account of what, for want of a better term, have been called his futuristic compositions, is his Opus 3, No. 2, the *Danse sauvage* ("The Wild Men's Dance"). Critical opinion has seized upon it as the most easily accessible of Ornstein's individualistic developments of mood in music. Such phrases as, "Like a boy's dream of wild Indians," "the rare roast beef of all Ornstein functions,"* "crazy carnival of legs and rum," "more suggestive of a free fight of ferocious energy than a dance," "a picture of primordial beings in all the savage abandonment of the wildest of corybantic revels," record some critical impressions. To one mind it calls up an image of "an imbecile child escaped from an asylum into a room where a piano happened to be, and thumping it with all his might." Again, it has been alluded to, perhaps not without an inflection of irony, as "a downright classic," and "its point, originality and suggestiveness" have been praised. It is true that its compelling power, its superenergetic rhythms, its electric vitality cannot well be negatived. Yet this "sheer dynamic force," this "rhythmical frenzy," to one able writer** on subjects musical represent "nothing so much as a child in an uncontrollable fit of hysteria," while to another,† when played by Ornstein himself, this "notable piece of delineative and characterizing music" gains a "savagery of voice, a clumping rhythm, a reiteration of pounding phrase, a primeval force and fury which make it sound out of the stone age of, by and for—as some will say—the cave men!"

* H. F. Peyser, an able, caustic and honest critic, unfortunately not in sympathy with Ornstein's trend.

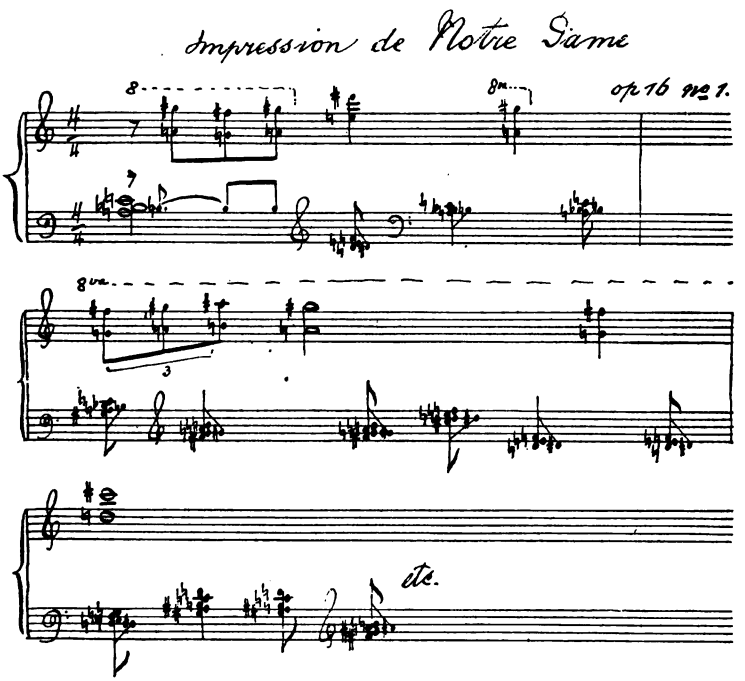
** Charles L. Buchanan.

† H. T. Parker.

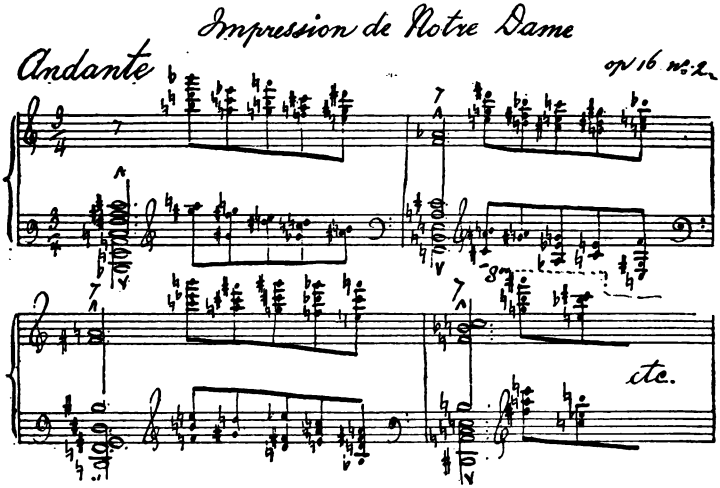
Ornstein himself speaks of his *Wild Men's Dance* as "a study in concrete rhythms." He says: "What I tried to do was to write a dance so intense in expression that, though physically impossible of execution as a dance, it would call up to the listener on the wings of imagination the limitless strength and abandon of the nature dance in primal times!"

The listener whose mind is open only to musical thought expressed with positive logical continuity, and in accord with certain accepted rules of presentation, cannot expect to grasp the vital potency of a mood inspiration whose logic is perfectly emotional, which carries away with it the spirit attuned to its key-note of absolute abandon of sequential arrangement. If the listener does not understand or appreciate the *Wild Men's Dance,* it is hardly likely that other compositions in Ornstein's second manner will appeal to him.

Ornstein's *Deux Impressions de Notre-Dame,* Op. 16, No. 1, are another case in point. The grandiose and phantasmagoric character of these two mood pictures is reflected even in the banal criticism passed at their first London performance "that the sight of the building had, for some cryptic reason, filled the composer with terrors that could not be controlled." And, of course, the programmatic indication of the chimes in the first, *Sound of Bells Floating through the Atmosphere,* has not escaped observation. "Jangled bells," "a quite clever imitation of cracked bells," however, do not adequately describe in his music "the conflicting yet mellowed resonances which ebb and flow from within and without in vibrant waves" through the vaulted arches of the great Gothic cathedral. And it is the spiritual thought underlying the trilling passages in handfuls of semitones, and the post-Schönbergian use of major seventh chord progressions that at once forces itself upon the auditor who has familiarized

himself with Ornstein's tonal idiom. It was in the summer of 1913 that Ornstein saw Notre-Dame for the first time and there attended mass, and so powerful an impression did this visualization of the ancient Gothic pile make

upon him that, oblivious of all else, he at once hastened to his hotel to set down his impressions on paper. To quote his own words: "I have sought to express the very soul of 'this vast symphony in stone,' as Victor Hugo calls it, to recreate the very spirit of those deep space dimensions reverberating with the passionate prayers, hopes and aspirations of past centuries." And the first *Impression,* as Paul Rosenfeld so well puts it, conveys a mysterious aloofness, a historied solitude "with its gray,

mounting masses, its cloistral reverberations of bells, its savage calls of the city to the one standing alone with the monument of a dead age."

In the second *Impression, The Gargoyles,* the composer's imagination has reacted with a sinister and terrifying eloquence to the compelling stimulus of its subject. In its music he raises from the dead stone the gargoyles —those fantastic evocations of the medieval sculptor's art, whose grotesque form and visage, bestial, rapacious, lewd, demoniac or imbecile in turn, borrow the lineaments of monster, bird and devil to express the revolt of the creative artist and thinker against the tyranny of the medieval Church and State. In Ornstein's musical vision these malign aberrations of the human spirit, these concrete symbols of intolerance and tyranny leave their lofty

eeries, and descend the winding stairways of the cathedral from tower and roof to gather about the high altar. There the spell which has for centuries perpetuated them, enduring memorials of ancient wrongs, is lifted; and they

take new shape and substance as the hidden obverse, the implied ideal whose antithesis they had represented. A poet's dream—the gargoyle coming to life for a fleeting moment to find a new soul!—and expressed with a fervor, a chaotic glory and confusion of irresistible resonance that compels conviction! And yet this very *Impression,* when first heard in London, was dismissed with the jeer that it "suggested a battle royal of cats on the tiles!"

Here, too, should be mentioned the composer's twenty-measure rhapsody *The Cathedral,* Op. 38, No. 2,* originally written to give a practical illustration of how to perform his music.

It has the following program:

The moon cast its rays upon the cathedral, which stood in its majestic omnipotence, silently waiting. Sharp, black figures crawled over the walls, and long, writhing figures, like green snakes, tore at the hard, square stones, their white teeth bristling. Bells sounded, first loud and harsh, then soft and mournful. The fate of a universe seemed concentrated on their peal. Suddenly all was dark, and a sharp shriek, wild and piercing, came through the black night. Great blocks of stone crashed, falling, into an abyss, into figures. A loud, piercing wail, then all was silence.

It is, in a way, an echo of the Notre-Dame *Impressions,* akin to them in character, and the composer explicitly states that his program is suggestive, an aid toward capturing the mood of his music, and not a literal commentary on its progress. Quite aside from its avowed purpose to supply a key-piece for those who wish to become better acquainted with his idiom, it forms an interesting pendant to the two larger "cathedral" mood pictures. The composer has since added to it three other compositions (still in MS.): No. 1, *The Bells;* No. 3, *The Monk* —is he a Rasputin?—and No. 4, *The Midnight Mass,* and

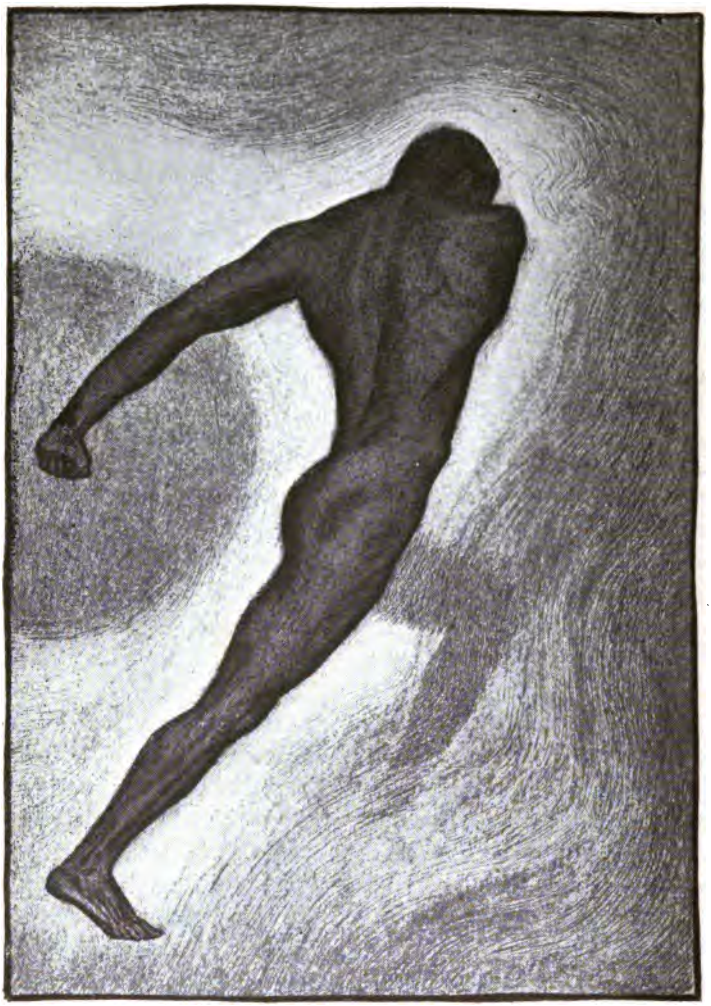
* The Musical Observer, December, 1913.

given the entire set the general title, *Four Religious Impressions.*

The *Impressions de la Tamise,* Op. 13, No. 1, in which we hear the bells of Westminster instead of the chimes of Notre-Dame, is a mood of another color. Walking along the Embankment one Sunday night in London, the composer, gazing across the Thames, saw the black mass of spires and chimneys rising on the farther edge of the stream, the twinkling lights on the river itself, while the soft tolling of the minster bells touched the entire scene with a gentle melancholy. And there came to him out of the night a vision of the waters of the river rising in an agitated torrent, sweeping away the bridges, overflowing their banks, tearing houses and people into their inky gulf and bearing away the multitudes of the dead upon its bosom till, sated, all was silent save the bells which now pealed out a threnody. Such is the composer's interpretation. It is carried out in a scheme of abrupt modulatory and dynamic contrasts, of exploitation of the alpha and omega of the keyboard register. Its music, H. T. Parker says, "seems a succession of strokes rather than an unfolding line." Other interpretations than that given by Ornstein himself have been read into it. Most critics see it as a realistic apotheosis of toil, as a programmatic picture of labor with imaginative sound detail, as "a rhapsody of grinding cranes, churning turbines, bells and factory whistles," of a scene "near the docks, where steamer sirens cry and the noise of cranes disturbs the foggy air, and all is gray and unbeautiful." Yet whatever concept it calls up, its potent virility, its intensity, evokes a picture of sombre power in the mind of the auditor, a picture which is the reflex of its youthful glow and vitality of inspiration.

The two *Pièces à Silhouette* (Shadow Pieces), Op. 17; the *Three Preludes,* Op. 20; the *Three Moods* (Anger,

Peace, Joy), Op. 22; the *Three Burlesques,* Op. 30, and the *Eleven Short Piano Pieces,* Op. 29, are all, in fact, mood pictures, with or without programmatic suggestion, chips from the same workshop that has produced the more sustained efforts already discussed. The first of the *Shadow Pieces,* a *Dance of Shadows,* is a veritable hurricane of counterpoint, one shadow overlapping the other in a mad whirl, yet whose intricate rhythms never lose clarity and whose chords evaporate into extended shadow figurations. The *Shadows Pursued* (No. 2) has a symbolic program. The child, endeavoring to catch his own shadow, typifies man who calmly at first, then with growing passion and intensity, seeks to attain his desires —unsubstantial shadows—and perishes in the vain attempt. The *Three Preludes* were the first of the composer's compositions in his "own" idiom lacking a program. They represent an endeavor to create real beauty in abstract sound and rhythm, as absolute music. The first, in particular, seeks to evoke an atmosphere of tragedy within the compass of a few measures, and the third may be called a species of exultant Bacchic dance. Of the *Three Moods* the composer says: "No man realizes joy until he has experienced rage, sorrow and its resolution, peace. And to understand my joy you must understand my anger as well, for my conception of both is so individual that one cannot be understood without the other." Of the three, *Anger* stands out as "a finely ugly piece of music of tremendous rhythmic interest," to quote A. Walter Kramer; while a critic less open to new impressions hears in it only "noise poured forth in tremendous volume." Léonide Massine, of the *Ballet Russe,* when he heard the *Three Moods,* paid the composer the compliment of asking him to make an orchestral transcript of them, so that he would be able to present them in the interpretative dance. The *Three Burlesques* are cynical, bitter, the sorrows of



ANGER

Werther shot with the disillusion of reality. They have been compared in music to Sime's drawings in art. They satirize in turn sentiment, joy and elegance with a harsh and vicious irony. "I do not spare even my own beliefs and emotions," says the composer of them, "and have sacrificed all else to express basic truth in bizarre caricature." The *Eleven Short Piano Pieces* (Scenes of Parisian Life), as might be expected, run a changing gamut of interest and appeal, and might be called individual "voices in the wilderness" crying their creator's gospel with varying inflections of intensity, giving brief illuminative vistas of his language and ideals in a reflex of reactions to the life of Paris during his stay in that city. They are tempestuous and ardently emotional—true musical children of a *Sturm und Drang* period!

The *Seven Fantasy Pieces* one critic calls "cubist" music and, derisively referring to the well-known painting, "Nude Descending a Staircase," implies that one of them might well be termed "Gentlemen in coat-of-mail falling down the stairway of a Fifth Avenue 'bus." Since they have no individual titles and are intensely modern in character, the gibe may be forgiven if the critic was honest in recording his impression. But too often conscience has no sting for the inventor of a happy phrase!

Here, too, might be mentioned the "Vannin" numbers, *The Night* and *The Waltzers*. Vannin is Ornstein, yet not Ornstein. The composer, eschewing the theory of double personality, does not claim that Vannin is the Mr. Jekyl of his Dr. Hyde. But he does feel that there is a phase of his creative nature which is distinct and individual, one with which his normal creative inspiration has nothing in common. Hence unto Vannin is rendered that which is Vannin's and not Ornstein's, an arrangement whose logic is clear. *The Night* paints a heaven "of brooding skies," obscure, sombre, oppressive; *The Waltzers*

"A LA CHINOISE"

(Street scene in a Chinese town.)

might be called a somewhat over-accented caricature of the social dance, a twentieth-century *Ox-Minuet,* in which grosser humans take the place of the oxen.

A la Chinoise (1911) Op. 39, dedicated to Rudolph Ganz, and played by the Swiss pianist, is probably the most "photographic" composition Ornstein has written. Tremendously difficult and effective, it is a tone picture of the street life of a Chinese city. In a glowing, exotic quasi-cacophony it weaves a brilliant web of sound in which are caught up the tintinnabulations of pagoda bells swaying in the breeze, the head-voice chatter of a Chinese crowd, cries of merchants soliciting purchasers for their wares, above the swelling chant of bonzes in processional, the curses of the beggars thrust aside by the pikemen of some mandarin's escort, the pentatone din of Chinese orchestras, and a thousand and one other flashes of incidental sound impinging on murmuring undercurrent of alien street noises.

The *Danse arabe* (1914), an Arabian Nights' fancy, might be called a companion piece of *A la Chinoise.* A blind beggar woman of Bagdad or Bassorah, once a caliph's favorite, appeals to the pity of the passerby with her cry for alms. She tells the story of her fall from her former high estate. She recalls the seductive powers of the dance which led the Commander of the Faithful to raise her from the ranks of the *almées* to the mistress of the *hareem* and a life of luxurious dalliance and intrigue. But earth's glories are short. The caliph dies and she is blinded by his successor's order. Again her voice drops to a monotonous drone as she pleads for alms. The music develops the sharp contrasts of pathos and sensuous delight with notable effect, and actually tells the story at which the rather colorless title merely hints.

The *Improvisata* and the *Galop Fantastique* are pieces of the same year (1914). In the first the composer em-

ployed his title more or less as a general indication for the designs and colors born of his imagination. It is nature music, a sort of seascape of brutal and aggressive character, yet full of vigor and vitality of movement. The *Galop Fantastique* is a mad elemental rout. It is a weaving together of the voices of the storm-winds and the roar of oceanic billows and has a tremendous sweep and swing.

The Masqueraders, composed about a year and a half ago, is another one of those bizarre ideas to which Ornstein's peculiar talent lends such vivid life in tone. An earlier impressionist, François Couperin, has evoked a set of maskers in his *Folies françaises ou les Dominos,* a set of variations on a single harmonic theme. In them he introduces Shame in rose, Impetuosity in red, Hope in green, Longing in violet, Perseverance in gray, etc., but they are all frivolous masqueraders, beneath whose disguises are gay faces, guileless of all ulterior motive. Ornstein's *Masqueraders* wear similar masks of many colors, but their masks are an artificial outer cloak to hide the soul reflected in their faces. These veiled prophets of Khorassan, fair and noble to outward seeming, as they are borne along in pleasure's rout, lose their disguise at the midnight hour and stand hideously revealed in all their true baseness and pretence. The composer has conceived this picture "from a photographic point of view," and has carried it out with uncompromising realism.

To return from these shorter numbers to the larger works, we have the *Suite des Gnomes* (Dwarves' Suite), Op. 11, composed in 1913, with its symbolic program representing the life of man, for man is a dwarf, a pigmy, helpless in the grip of cosmic forces. (1) *Dawn* is the gray dawn of the soul's awakening to the realities of life. The tragic undercurrent of meaning in the music denies with fatalistic resignation the possibility of either joy or

sorrow in a vale of tears. (2) *Danse des Gnomes* (Dwarf's Dance). Man is obsessed by the futile desire to flee life's *ennui* in exhilarating rhythmic motion. For a space the dance brings forgetfulness, but soon there comes reaction and the familiar vista of eternal sameness. (3) The *Funeral March** is, emotionally, perhaps, the most important number of the suite. Its pathos is deep and unfeigned. Written in triple time, it is no conventional mortuary march with a "Song of Hope" to imply that all's well that ends well. It is rather the tonal embodiment of uncompromising grief, an Oriental chant with the wail of hired mourners. There is no confident looking forward to a snug immortality; it is stark despair hiding away that which is no more in the ground. We taste the black earth to which all must return, we feel the grit of death beneath our tongue, we hear the sods rattle on the coffin-lid. In the middle there is a great despairing outburst of extended hopelessness and resentment, and at the end the tolling of fatalistic bells. (4) *The Serenaders* are such as we might hear before "The Harlot's House" of Oscar Wilde, when "Love passed into the house of lust." Man, abandoning the ideals of perfect love, sings his passion to the courtesan, to a measure in which, like his slain ideals:

* Beeth Vanhoven, writing in the Winnipeg (Canada) Telegram in 1916, offers some interesting comments on the Funeral March: "I can imagine a somewhat vulgar mind—seeking for images—being impressed by the opening movement as the wrangling of stokers in Hades, protesting at the prospect of another denizen of earth being thrust upon them. . . . It is not out of tune with the sombre, diabolic imagination of the composer. The frightful grinding in mid-piano . . . suggested the iron inexorability of death . . . death as a colossal, whirring, palpitating machine, a titanic crusher of bones. The cracked chimes at the close had something sinister, awry, diabolic about them . . . attributes one can readily associate with a mocking requiem tolled by lost spirits in the black swirl of the underworld. There was in them a note of fiendish laughter, as of a fallen archangel gloating over the dissipated pomp of earthly existence . . . seared, blackened, defaced in death."

"The dead are dancing with the dead,
The dust is whirling with the dust."

(5) *At Work* does not picture the soul-inspiring gladness of congenial toil, but man working from habit, caught up in the dull mechanical round of ceaseless labor without any of the compensating joy of achievement to sweeten its monotony. (6) *Marche grotesque.* Here in the form of a theme with variations, employing cake-walk rhythms to parody the modern social dance, we have the wretched seeker of artificial pleasure, going through the motions of amusement without real hope or interest. The final variation might be termed a collective cry of despair. A program such as this makes clear that the *Dwarf Suite* was not written to please. It is, above all else, a most poignantly sincere expression of psychic experience and, as A. Walter Kramer has said: "If ever the tragic note has been sounded in modern music it is surely to be found in this work!"

The *Sonata,* Op. 25 (1914), is in four movements, entitled, respectively, *Tragedy, Love, Mystery, Retrospection.* Its first and third movements offer an intensely vivid record of personal emotion of the episodic revolt of youth at the bitterness and delusions of actual life, of its vague hopes and aspirations; and those "other emotions, timid and uncertain of themselves, uneasy with the swelling sap of springtide, speak their poetry and their pain in the movement of the same sonata entitled *Love.*" And in the finale, *Retrospection,* there is summed up all that has gone before. Its sub-title, *The Tragedy of a Soul,* the composer has always hesitated to make public and it appears on none of his recital programs. He himself says of it: "I have tried to put into it the restlessness of the artist's soul, the emotions that so often tear at my own." It is alternately passionate, despondent, elated, bitter, joyous and melancholy.

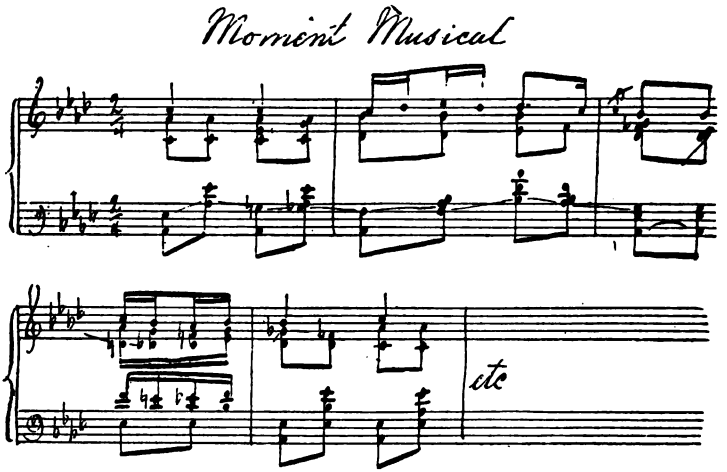
The *Concerto* for piano and orchestra, Op. 44, still in MS., is written in C sharp minor, in the usual four movements, and is built up on Tschaikovskian lines. It is emphatically Russian in feeling and expression, a brilliant work, full of pianistic difficulties, and the composer will probably be heard in it during the coming season.

Yet these works by no means complete the tale of Ornstein's piano music. The recently published *Serenade* and *Scherzino,* Op. 5,* are graceful, engaging fancies in his earlier manner, which one need not be a modernist to appreciate. The *Valley of Tears* (*Impressions of Norway*) was inspired by bleak Scandinavian landscapes, and the cruel efforts by which the Norse peasant wrests a bare living from the unwilling soil. His most recent works include: *A la Mexicana,* three folk-air impressions for the piano; the *Arabesques,* Op. 48; his *Poems of 1917,* Op. 68; his *Suite Belgium;* his brilliant *Burlesques of Richard Strauss,* and two transcripts, one of Dvořak's *Humoresque,* planned for added sonority and pianistic effect, and not without some interesting touches of the transcriber's own personality in its development; and one of a Schubert *Moment Musical,* a version in which, as a glance at the excerpt on the page following might tend to prove, the anarch handles his original with piety and regard for its piquant charm.

A la Mexicana, three engaging playable bits of local color in the style of the Mexican *danzon,* have all the light grace of their kind, they strike the folk-tune note implied by their title with happy skill and ingratiating rhythm; and their obvious colorful attractiveness will probably meet with a wider meed of appreciation than will be accorded many of the composer's more serious works.

* Carl Van Vechten, in his interesting essay on Leo Ornstein ("Music and Bad Manners") stresses the dual musical personality of the composer of the *Scherzino* and *The Wild Men's Dance.* The former "was not the Ornstein who, in a dark corner of Pogliani's, glowed with glee over the possibility of dividing and redividing the existing scale into eighth, sixteenth, and twenty-fourth tones. . . ."

An interlinear text expressing the spirit of the music emphasizes their racially popular character.

The *Arabesques* do credit to their collective title, both in its decorative and its metaphoric sense. They are a

series of individual musical designs, rich in color, but (to borrow a geometric term) their note-combinations are curvilinear rather than rectilinear. Unlike the arabesques of Saracenic mural art, however, their involute symmetry is implied rather than apparent. In their way they are among the most interesting things the composer has done, and their fantastic interweaving of musical lines is carried out with a fine sense for effect. Their individual titles give wide latitude to the imagination of the player.

Some sound an Oriental note: We have *L'Isle d'Eléphantine,* (1) calling up visions of Nilotic ruins, and *Mélopée de Prêtres Hindous,* (3) which might be a nocturnal chant rising to the carven roof of some Benares temple. *L'Echo Primitif* (2) is a vague emotional cry of primal feeling, half rage, half plaining. *Eaux Ombragées*

(4) gives us the feeling of "shadowed waters," of the veiled deeps in forest tarn. In *L'Ame des Cloches* (5), and the *Fresque Pompéienne* (6), the first a study in bell-colors, the second a kind of Grecian dance, we have delightful bits of contrasted programmatic development. *Passion* (7), a thrilling bit of inspiration, is akin to *L'Echo Primitif*. *Le Vent qui gémit et rage* (9), is another bit of nature-music of finely wrought and expressive quality; while *Les Basoches* (8) gives us a convincing impression of medieval *grotesquerie*. The pieces are compelling and, despite occasional difficulties, richly repay study.

The *Poems of 1917* were written in Montreal. A group of ten pieces, each portrays some phase of the suffering resulting from the world war, and reflects the anguish and resentment of the primal savagery which drives man to shed the blood of his fellows. In each the melodic line is very distinct—and in the accompanying figure recurs a persistent throb, a kind of rhythmic pulse-beat whose relentless insistence emphasizes the grief which is the soul of their inspiration.

Waldo Frank, Associate Editor of *The Seven Arts*, has written for the *Poems of 1917* a prose poem of rare beauty, a *Prelude* which shows that the truth and sincerity of their music has made a direct appeal to his imagination. Though we may not quote the *Prelude* to the *Poems of 1917 in toto*, as a deserved tribute to its poetic appositeness and very real inspiration, and though it is hardly right to do violence to its unity by a mere excerpt, we cannot forbear giving its concluding paragraphs—they express the true spirit and inwardness of the music's meaning in a manner which could not be bettered:

"What did they (men and women) know but each other? What did they have but each other? What could they have and know, save one thing—love? The Mystery of Life was not anguish enough for them—the bonds of

PASSION
(Arabesques)

Birth and of Death were not helplessness enough for them; the blind ecstasy of the world that circled them and made them quivering flesh of its despair was not despair enough for them. And the walls of their prison laughed.

"I stood high upon the agony of the living and looked upon men—upon the pity of men who had love and who cast love away. This year I was a man and looked about me. And I saw my brothers and sisters—they who in all the common blackness of their lot had only love, and who hated each other. And the laughter of our Prison was clear to me. So the years of all my life shall be the years of my sorrow."

The *Suite Belgium* is another series of mood pictures, akin to the *Poems of 1917*, and springing out of the deep sympathy evoked by the fate of a small people ground between the upper and nether millstones of modern war.

With the Richard Strauss *Burlesques* we step from tragedy to comedy. Here we have twelve brilliant essays in musical satire. The individual pieces have no titles, but each is a witty burlesque, playful or sardonic, as the case may be, of the idioms and peculiarities of the great Bavarian's style and mode of expression, with apt and telling reference to his incessant modulatory changes and his zig-zag motives. They are entirely original with the composer, since he has not had recourse to Straussian themes to make his points. Both the *Burlesques of Richard Strauss* and the *A la Chinoise* will be heard this season on symphonic programs, in the composer's own orchestration.

His piano works, thus far, may be said to represent the best-known expression of Ornstein's creative impulse; yet it would be strange indeed if a composer of such intense creative activity and abounding imaginative vigor had not essayed other mediums of expression.

He has, in fact, written in all the larger forms, with the exception of opera, and in this field, too, he is now trying out his powers. He has composed symphonic

works, choral music, chamber music, compositions in both the larger and smaller forms for the violin, the 'cello and other solo instruments and songs.

His two symphonic poems for grand orchestra, *The Fog,* and his orchestral suite, *The Life of Man* (the latter after Leonid Andreyeff), have not as yet been heard in public.

The Fog, a London impression, evokes an elemental surging of the phantasmagoric shapes which rise and overwhelm the sleeping city with their vague and shadowy menace. *The Life of Man,* an orchestral suite, is a more extended work and comments in its Prelude and five movements the Prologue and corresponding acts of Andreyeff's drama. Here the nebulous tonal *chiaro-oscuro* of *The Fog* is replaced by a more harsh and definite scheme of grays. It tells in tone, as the drama does in dialogue and action, the tale of the whole life of Man, "with its dark beginning and dark end." Its moral is best expressed in Andreyeff's words: "And ye who have come hither for mirth, ye who are doomed to die, look and listen! Lo, the swiftly flowing life of Man will pass before you, with its sorrow and its joys, like a far-off, thin reflection!" The theme of the "Being in Gray," who appears in the Prologue of the play, and in each succeeding act, is woven into the harmonic development of each movement of the Suite.

There is gloomy power and compelling contrast, a tragic significance and a working up of dramatic intensity that culminates in the close of the last movement, where "in the darkness one can hear the movements of the wild dancers, the shrieking, the laughter and the discordant and desperately loud sounds of the orchestra." Ornstein has tried to put into his music not only the color-scheme and philosophy of the drama, but, as he says: "I have even gone so far as to attempt Andreyeff's sharp-

angled rhythmic effects, which are an unmistakable factor in the power of the play."

The piano versions of *A la Chinoise* and the *Burlesques on Richard Strauss,* as well as the *Funeral March* from the *Dwarves' Suite,* have already been considered. They are to be heard in orchestral guise this season, and Mr. Josef Stransky, whose catholic good taste and absence of all narrow prejudice where "new" music is concerned is well known, will be the first to present *A la Chinoise* —as a delightful orchestral *bonne bouche*—and the *Funeral March* with the New York Philharmonic. Speculation regarding symphonic works as yet unheard is more or less futile. Yet that delicate adjustment of the individual tone-dynamics of the chord which gives so rich a color to the composer's piano music should make itself felt even more convincingly in the varied *timbres* of the symphonic ensemble. And, to quote W. H. Humiston, an authority, Stransky, "who is keen on detail, yet who never neglects the 'grand idea,'" may be relied upon to see to it that his artists "put their best foot forward" in the *Funeral March,* and give *A la Chinoise* its full measure of exotic glow and brilliancy in their interpretation.

In the field of chamber-music Ornstein has done some of his most important work. We have, using the term in its broader sense, such compositions as the *Impressions of Switzerland* (Sunrise, The Forest, The Mountains, Sunset), Op. 27, for piano four-hand, quartet and chorus. We have—the composer's only composition in which his two styles may be said to have been blended—his noble setting of the Thirteenth Psalm, Op. 27, in which the *a cappella* chorus theme, "How long, O Lord, wilt Thou forget me?" is developed and amplified for double mixed chorus, double string orchestra and piano.

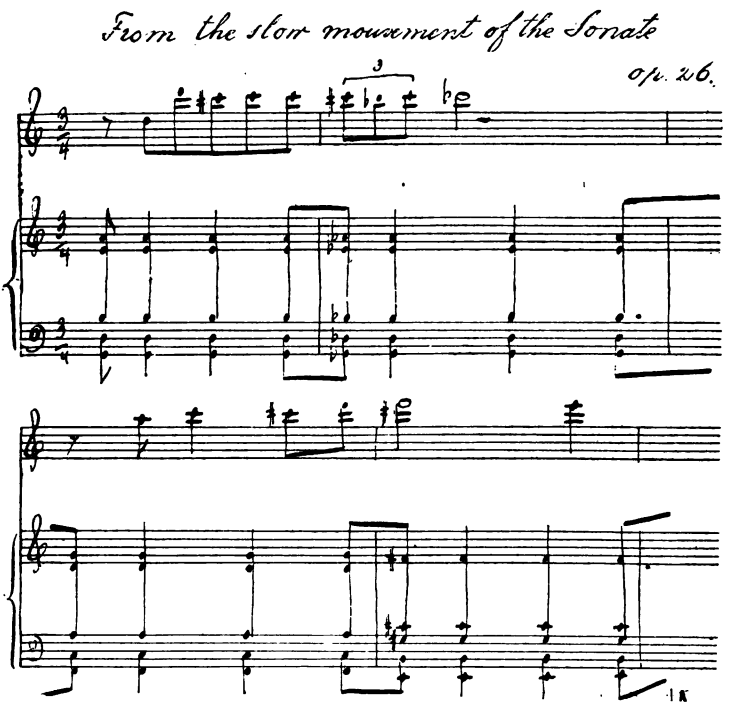
And there are, besides, a *Quartet* for strings, Op. 28; a piano *Quintet,* Op. 49 (in press), and a *Miniature String*

Quartet in his most advanced manner. In the last-named each instrument has been given solo treatment, effective use has been made of contrapuntal devices throughout the four movements, and a peculiarity of the first is the introduction of the theme by the first violin. The work is dedicated to the Flonzaley Quartet.

Important, too, are his sonatas for violin and piano and for 'cello and piano. In the *Sonata* for violin and piano, Op. 26, in which, according to the acerb H. F. Peyser, "the violin sings itself on its course with sugared complacency," Mr. Von Kunitz* finds "a rich soul-life unfolding itself through a mysterious, logical web of its own; the strange dream and the winning simplicity of the Andante, singing of distant countries, Eastern sunsets, Arabian flowers, far away; the petulant mockery of the Scherzo, full of weird, fantastic caprice, with an emphatically ponderous 'trio'-episode; and the serene dignity of the Finale, with its stirring climaxes and its wistful coda."

It is a work not without Debussian inflections, most grateful for the performer (and giving undeniable pleasure in the interpretation of an artist like Miss Vera Barstow). Yet it does not compare in importance of thought-content with the famous second *Sonata,* Op. 31, also for the same instruments, which represents a reaction to the influence of the poetry of William Blake, and the enthusiasm for the new musical vistas which the writings of the poet opened up to the composer. This sonata has come in for its full share of derision: "The wall-paper design sonata," "a terrifying looking affair recently printed" were among the comments its appearance evoked. Its difficulty is almost prohibitive and the playing of the piano part is limited to the virtuoso. It is thus far, however, perhaps the most sustained develop-

* Canadian Journal of Music.

ment on a large scale of an inspiration which concentrates on the evocation of pure emotion in music and holds all else more or less negligible. Purely in conformity with

its title, for it cannot be called a "sonata" in any formal sense, it is divided into four movements. These, to quote A. Walter Kramer, interpret their program, the Prelude to William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* "as far as we can judge, faithfully enough." And it is unquestionably "program music of wonderful sweep and power, music of demoniac intensity of expression and startlingly vivid dramatic emphasis." As yet uncompleted are the Sonatinas for violin and piano, Op. 60 and Op. 74.

For the 'cello the composer has written no less than

four sonatas. What has been said in the preceding section regarding Ornstein's attitude toward form is applicable to them. There is also a *Sonatina* for 'cello and piano which has not yet come from press.

As regards his shorter compositions for violin and for 'cello they reflect a more lyric and quasi-conventional type rather than his most individualistic mode of expression. The *Three Russian Impressions,* Op. 37, for violin and piano, *Olga, Natascha* and *Sonja,* the first and last in waltz tempo, the second a melody in folk-tone style, are Russian in the Tschaikovskian sense (yet with a flavor that is not Tschaikovsky's), colorful and effective, despite their conventional mold. *Barcarolle* and *Scherzo* bear an early opus-number, 3; and *Two Miniatures,* Op. 9, are transcripts from the set of pianoforte *Miniatures* already described. Recently published are two transcriptions for violin and piano, Op. 43, one of the melodious *June Barcarolle* of Tschaikovsky, one of the Rubinstein *Barcarolle* in F minor. As in the Schubert and Dvořák piano transcripts these apportion a maximum of effect to the solo instrument, while showing artistic versatility in the handling of the accompanimental harmonies. They give proof of the appreciation and intelligence with which Ornstein approaches the work of a fellow composer, and his respect for intrinsically valid art manifestations which may differ from his own.

Four Pieces for violin and piano, Op. 55; *Five Pieces* for 'cello and piano, Op. 75, and *Andante* and *Allegro* for flute and piano, Op. 57, are still in MS. or in process of gestation.

Nor has Ornstein neglected the song, that most direct of all vehicles for the presentation of musical thought.

While still an East Side schoolboy, he had already written some twenty song settings of Robert Burns, whose poetry then obsessed him. His songs, *There Was a*

Jolly Miller Once, and the Rudyard Kipling setting, *Mother o' Mine,* both date from this period. The former has a melody of real lyric spontaneity, its "final *tranquillo* with its *obstinato* figure is the piano part worthy of a young master." The composer first sketched it during a syntax lesson in the classroom on a blank page of his grammar, with one eye on his teacher to see that he was not observed. The Kipling setting is sombre, but rich in dramatic feeling, and represents a fine individual concept of a poem often set.

The three *Lieder* (2), Op. 33, *Wiegenliedchen* (Cradle Song), *In Goldener Fülle* (A Vision of Glory) and *Waldseligkeit* (Alone in the Forest), mark an abrupt transition from the manner of their predecessors. The piano accompaniments are orchestrally conceived, in the *Cradle Song* in particular, and the voice is handled with an *obbligato* effect. The same poems had already been set by Richard Strauss; yet they appealed so strongly to Ornstein that he felt impelled to set them in turn. A comparison between the two musical versions is somewhat difficult to establish, since their composers do not use the same language. The Strauss songs are far more lyric in the accepted sense of the word; their harmonic development is subordinated to the movement of the melodic line. Ornstein is more intense, more preoccupied with revealing the intimate psychos of the poetic idea than with making concessions to ideals of expression which he does not find adequate for his purpose. His melodies are incidental in the working out of his musical concept as a whole. As he himself says: "In the Strauss *Cradle Song* you have only a pictorial illustration of a woman rocking a cradle. I have tried to go below the surface, to show the fears and hopes for her child that fill the mother's mind."

Four settings of Blake poems, Op. 18 (1, *Spring,* 2. *My Silks in Fine Array.* 3, *Memory, Hither Come.*

4. *Mad Song*), like the *Sonata,* Op. 31, do homage to the influence of the English poet-philosopher. They have never been published, and should prove of interest because the composer, endeavoring to give the poems their most intimate musical expression, has tried not only to reproduce their thought-content, but to "strip his music of all artificiality," and equal in tone "Blake's happy faculty of reaching out unfailingly for the essential truth."

Ornstein has been devoting more attention of late to the song. Among the various songs he has written recently might be instanced *Six Russian Songs* to texts by Pushkin, Op. 76; a *Tartar Lament* that makes a poignant appeal; a fervid Arabian *Gazal* or love song (dedicated to Reinold Werrenrath), and an expressive melody, *She Stoops in Visions of the Night.* And a set of three Russian choruses for mixed voices, just completed, might also be mentioned here.

All in all, these works of Leo Ornstein represent a notable harvest of inspiration to have been gathered by one so young. Yet youth, intellectually and emotionally, is sometimes a relative concept—Schubert wrote his *Forellen-Quintet* at the age of seventeen. We may be as old as our feelings or as young as our thoughts. Mental and emotional development is not invariably a matter of years, and Ornstein is one of those exceptions which go to prove the general rule. In his case youth lends him the fiery energy, the passionate concentration, the intense belief in his aims and ideals which inform the musical maturity of his inspiration with so triumphant an accent of sincerity, so eloquent a feeling of truth. His creative work is the logical outcome of his ideas, the spontaneous fruition of absolute conviction, the irrefutable evidence of his artistic honesty. Whether or not we accept it, together with the doctrines of which it is the outcome, the fact of its existence as the true and legitimate musical

materialization of definite trends and consistent ideals in composition and expression cannot well be gainsayed.

Ornstein possesses in a supreme degree what Paul Rosenfeld has called "the ability to transmute into art, by means of a powerful and lurid imagination, the life of his time." In his own way, according to the light that has been given him, the composer turns emotion into music—emotion, "thought in a glow," and the well-spring of all life's activities—and gives it to the world as that tribute to his art which every true artist owes humanity at large. And to revert to the words of the writer already quoted:* "One can only rejoice that he should already have expressed in such original, powerful and permanent form what of life has been revealed to him, and await with confidence the donation his developed breadth and poise is sure of making us."

* "Ornstein," by Paul Rosenfeld. The New Republic, May 27, 1916.

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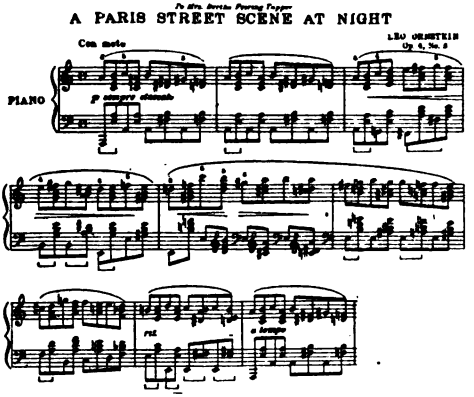
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